

Lazarus Laughed

and

Dynamo

By the Same Author

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THE EMPEROR JONES

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

THE HAIRY APE

ANNA CHRISTIE

BEYOND THE HORIZON

ALL GOD'S CHILLON GOT WINGS

THE GREAT GOD BROWN

MARCO MILLIONS

STRANGE INTERLUDE

Lazarus Laughed
and
Dynamo
Two Plays by
Eugene O'Neill



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Lazarus Laughed
(1925-1926)

A Play for an Imaginative Theatre

ACT ONE :

Scene One : Lazarus' home in Bethany—a short time after the miracle.

Scene Two : Months later. Outside the House of Laughter in Bethany. Late evening.

ACT TWO :

Scene One : A street in Athens. A night months later.

Scene Two : A temple immediately inside the walls of Rome. Midnight. Months later.

ACT THREE :

Scene One : Garden of Tiberius' palace. A night a few days later.

Scene Two : Inside the palace. Immediately after.

ACT FOUR :

Scene One : The same. A while after.

Scene Two : Interior of a Roman theatre. Dawn of the same night.

Characters

LAZARUS OF BETHANY
HIS FATHER
HIS MOTHER
MARTHA } *his sisters*
MARY
MIRIAM, *his wife*
SEVEN GUESTS, *neighbours of Lazarus*
CHORUS OF OLD MEN
AN ORTHODOX PRIEST
CHORUS OF LAZARUS' FOLLOWERS
A CENTURION
GAIUS CALIGULA
CRASSUS, *a Roman General*
CHORUS OF GREEKS
SEVEN CITIZENS OF ATHENS
CHORUS OF ROMAN SENATORS
SEVEN SENATORS
CHORUS OF LEGIONARIES
FLAVIUS, *a centurion*
MARCELLUS, *a patrician*
CHORUS OF THE GUARD
TIBERIUS CÆSAR
POMPEIA
CHORUS OF YOUTHS AND GIRLS
CHORUS OF THE ROMAN POPULACE
CROWDS

A C T O N E

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *Exterior and interior of Lazarus' home at Bethany.* The main room at the front end of the house is shown—a long, low-ceilinged, sparingly furnished chamber, with white walls grey in the fading daylight that enters from three small windows at the left. To the left of centre several long tables placed lengthwise to the width of the room, around which many chairs for guests have been placed. In the rear wall, right, a door leading into the rest of the house. On the left, a doorway opening on a road where a crowd of men has gathered. On the right, another doorway leading to the yard where there is a crowd of women.

Inside the house, on the men's side, seven male Guests are grouped by the door, watching Lazarus with frightened awe, talking hesitantly in low whispers. The Chorus of Old Men, seven in number, is drawn up in a crescent, in the far corner, right, facing Lazarus.

[All of these people are masked in accordance with the following scheme : There are seven periods of life shown : Boyhood (or Girlhood), Youth, Young Manhood (or Womanhood), Manhood (or Womanhood), Middle Age, Maturity, and Old Age ; and each of these periods is represented by seven different masks of general types of character as follows : The Simple, Ignorant ; the Happy, Eager ; the

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Self-Tortured, Introspective ; the Proud, Self-Reliant ; the Servile, Hypocritical ; the Revengeful, Cruel ; the Sorrowful, Resigned. Thus in each crowd (this includes among the men the Seven Guests who are composed of one male of each period-type as period one—type one, period two—type two, and so on up to period seven—type seven) there are forty-nine different combinations of period and type. Each type has a distinct predominant colour for its costumes, which varies in kind according to its period. The masks of the Chorus of Old Men are double the size of the others. They are all seven in the Sorrowful, Resigned type of Old Age.]

On a raised platform at the middle of the one table placed lengthwise at centre sits Lazarus, his head haloed and his body illumined by a soft radiance as of tiny phosphorescent flames.

Lazarus, freed now from the fear of death, wears no mask.

In appearance Lazarus is tall and powerful, about fifty years of age, with a mass of grey-black hair and a heavy beard. His face recalls that of a statue of a divinity of Ancient Greece in its general structure, and particularly in its quality of detached serenity. It is dark-complexioned, ruddy and brown, the colour of rich earth upturned by the plough, calm but furrowed deep with the marks of former suffering endured with a grim fortitude that had never softened into resignation. His forehead is

LAZARUS LAUGHED

broad and noble, his eyes black and deep-set. Just now he is staring straight before him as if his vision were still fixed beyond life.

Kneeling beside him with bowed heads are his wife, Miriam ; his sisters, Martha and Mary ; and his Father and Mother.

Miriam is a slender, delicate woman of thirty-five, dressed in deep black, who holds one of his hands in both of hers, and keeps her lips pressed to it. The upper part of her face is covered by a mask which conceals her forehead, eyes and nose, but leaves her mouth revealed. The mask is the pure pallor of marble, the expression that of a statue of Woman, of her eternal acceptance of the compulsion of motherhood, the inevitable cycle of love into pain into joy, and new love into separation and pain again, and the loneliness of age. The eyes of the mask are almost closed. Their gaze turns within, oblivious to the life outside, as they dream down on the child forever in memory at her breast. The mouth of Miriam is sensitive and sad, tender with an eager, understanding smile of self-forgetful love, the lips still fresh and young. Her skin, in contrast to the mask, is sunburned and earth-coloured like that of Lazarus. Martha, Mary, and the two parents all wear full masks which broadly reproduce their own characters. Martha is a buxom middle-aged housewife, plain and pleasant. Mary is young and pretty, nervous and high-strung. The Father is a small, thin,

LAZARUS LAUGHED

*feeble old man of over eighty, meek and pious.
The Mother is tall and stout, over sixty-five, a
gentle, simple woman.*

*All the masks of these Jews of the first two
scenes of the play are pronouncedly Semitic.*

*A background of twilight sky. A dissolving
touch of sunset still lingers on the horizon.*

*It is some time after the miracle and Jesus
has gone away.*

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*in a quavering rising and
falling chant—their arms outstretched toward
Lazarus*). Jesus wept !

Behold how he loved him !

He that liveth,

He that believeth,

Shall never die !

CROWD (*on either side of house, echo the chant*).
He that believeth

Shall never die !

Lazarus, come forth !

FIRST GUEST (*a Simple Boy—in a frightened
whisper after a pause of dead silence*). That
strange light seems to come from within him !
(With awe.) Think of it ! For four days he
lay in the tomb ! (Turns away with a shudder.)

SECOND GUEST (*a Happy Youth—with reassuring
conviction*). It is a holy light. It came from Jesus.

FIFTH GUEST (*an Envious, Middle-Aged Man*).
Maybe if the truth were known, our friend there
never really died at all !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

FOURTH GUEST (*a Defiant Man, indignantly*). Do you doubt the miracle? I tell you I was here in this house when Lazarus died!

SEVENTH GUEST (*an Aged, Sorrowful Man*). And I used to visit him every day. He knew himself his hour was near.

FOURTH GUEST. He wished for death! He said to me one day: "I have known my fill of life and the sorrow of living. Soon I shall know peace." And he smiled. It was the first time I had seen him smile in years.

THIRD GUEST (*a Self-Tortured Man—gloomily*). Yes, of late years his life had been one long misfortune. One after another his children died—

SIXTH GUEST (*a Mature Man with a cruel face—with a harsh laugh*). They were all girls. Lazarus had no luck.

SEVENTH GUEST. The last was a boy, the one that died at birth. You are forgetting him.

THIRD GUEST. Lazarus could never forget. Not only did his son die, but Miriam could never bear him more children.

FIFTH GUEST (*practically*). But he could not blame bad luck for everything. Take the loss of his father's wealth since he took over the management. That was his own doing. He was a bad farmer, a poor breeder of sheep, and a bargainer so easy to cheat it hurt one's conscience to trade with him!

LAZARUS LAUGHED

SIXTH GUEST (*with a sneer—maliciously*). You should know best about that !

(*A suppressed laugh from those around him.*)

FIRST GUEST (*who has been gazing at Lazarus—softly*). Ssssh ! Look at his face !

(*They all stare. A pause.*)

SECOND GUEST (*with wondering awe*). Do you remember him, neighbours, before he died ? He used to be pale even when he worked in the fields. Now he seems as brown as one who has laboured in the earth all day in a vineyard beneath the hot sun !

(*A pause.*)

FOURTH GUEST. The whole look of his face has changed. He is like a stranger from a far land. There is no longer any sorrow in his eyes. They must have forgotten sorrow in the grave.

FIFTH GUEST (*grumblingly*). I thought we were invited here to eat—and all we do is stand and gape at him !

FOURTH GUEST (*sternly*). Be silent ! We are waiting for him to speak.

THIRD GUEST (*impressively*). He did speak once. And he laughed !

ALL THE GUESTS (*amazed and incredulous*). Laughed ?

THIRD GUEST (*importantly*). Laughed ! I heard him ! It was a moment after the miracle—

LAZARUS LAUGHED

MIRIAM (*her voice, rich with sorrow, exultant now*). Jesus cried, " Lazarus, come forth ! "

(*She kisses his hand. He makes a slight movement, a stirring in his vision. The Guests stare. A frightened pause.*)

FIFTH GUEST (*nudging the Second—uneasily*). Go on with your story !

THIRD GUEST. Just as he appeared in the opening of the tomb, wrapped in his shroud—

SECOND GUEST (*excitedly—interrupting*). My heart stopped ! I fell on my face ! And all the women screamed ! (*Sceptically*.) You must have sharp ears to have heard him laugh in that uproar !

THIRD GUEST. I helped to pry away the stone, so I was right beside him. I found myself kneeling, but between my fingers I watched Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus looked into his face for what seemed a long time, and suddenly Lazarus said " Yes," as if he were answering a question in Jesus' eyes.

ALL THE GUESTS (*mystified*). Yes ? What could he mean by yes ?

THIRD GUEST. Then Jesus smiled sadly but with tenderness, as one who from a distance of years of sorrow remembers happiness. And then Lazarus knelt and kissed Jesus' feet and both of them smiled and Jesus blessed him and called him " My Brother " and went away ; and Lazarus, looking after Him, began to laugh softly like a

LAZARUS LAUGHED

man in love with God ! Such a laugh I never heard ! It made my ears drunk ! It was like wine ! And though I was half-dead with fright I found myself laughing, too !

MIRIAM (*with a beseeching summons*). Lazarus, come forth !

CHORUS (*chanting*). Lazarus ! Come forth !

CROWD (*on either side of the house—echoing the chant*). Come forth ! Come forth !

LAZARUS (*suddenly in a deep voice—with a wonderful exultant acceptance in it*). Yes !

(*The Guests in the room, the Crowds outside, all cry out in fear and joy and fall on their knees.*)

CHORUS (*chanting exultantly*). The stone is taken away !

The spirit is loosed !

The soul let go !

LAZARUS (*rising and looking around him at everyone and everything—with an all-embracing love—gently*). Yes !

(*His family and the Guests in the room now throng about Lazarus to embrace him. The Crowds of men and women on each side push into the room to stare at him. He is in the arms of his Mother and Miriam while his Sisters and Father kiss and press his hands. The five are half-hysterical with relief and joy, sobbing and laughing.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

FATHER. My son is reborn to me !

CHORUS. Hosanna !

ALL (*with a great shout*). Hosanna !

FATHER. Let us rejoice ! Eat and drink ! Draw up your chairs, friends ! Music ! Bring wine !

(*Music begins in the room off right rear—a festive dance tune. The company sit down in their places, the Father and Mother at Lazarus' right and left, Miriam next to the Mother, Martha and Mary beside the Father. But Lazarus remains standing. And the Chorus of Old Men remain in their formation at the rear. Wine is poured and all raise their goblets toward Lazarus—then suddenly they stop, the music dies out, and an awed and frightened stillness prevails, for Lazarus is a strange, majestic figure whose understanding smile seems terrible and enigmatic to them.*)

FATHER (*pathetically uneasy*). You frighten us, my son. You are strange—standing there—(*In the midst of a silence more awkward than before he rises to his feet, goblet in hand—forcing his voice, falteringly.*) A toast, neighbours !

CHORUS (*in a forced echo*). A toast !

ALL (*echoing them*). A toast !

FATHER. To my son, Lazarus, whom a blessed miracle has brought back from death !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS (*suddenly laughing softly out of his vision, as if to himself, and speaking with a strange unearthly calm in a voice that is like a loving whisper of hope and confidence*). No ! There is no death !

(*A moment's pause. The people remain with goblets uplifted, staring at him. Then all repeat after him questioningly and frightenedly.*)

ALL. There—is—no—death ?

SIXTH GUEST (*suddenly blurts out the question which is in the minds of all*). What did you find beyond there, Lazarus ?

(*A pause of silence.*)

LAZARUS (*smiles gently and speaks as if to a group of inquisitive children*). O Curious Greedy Ones, is not one world in which you know not how to live enough for you ?

SIXTH GUEST (*emboldened*). Why did you say yes, Lazarus ?

FOURTH GUEST. Why did you laugh ?

ALL THE GUESTS (*with insistent curiosity but in low awed tones*). What is beyond there, Lazarus ?

CHORUS (*in a low murmur*). What is beyond there ? What is beyond ?

CROWD (*carrying the question falteringly back into silence*). What is beyond ?

LAZARUS (*suddenly again—now in a voice of loving exultation*). There is only life ! I heard the

LAZARUS LAUGHED

heart of Jesus laughing in my heart ; " There is Eternal Life in No," it said, " and there is the same Eternal Life in Yes ! Death is the fear between ! " And my heart reborn to love of life cried " Yes ! " and I laughed in the laughter of God !

(*He begins to laugh, softly at first—a laugh so full of a complete acceptance of life, a profound assertion of joy in living, so devoid of all self-consciousness or fear, that it is like a great bird song triumphant in depths of sky, proud and powerful, infectious with love, casting on the listener an entralling spell. The crowd in the room are caught by it. Glancing sideways at one another, smiling foolishly and self-consciously, at first they hesitate, plainly holding themselves in for fear of what the next one will think.*)

CHORUS (*in a chanting murmur*). Lazarus laughs !

Our hearts grow happy !

Laughter like music !

The wind laughs !

The sea laughs !

Spring laughs from the earth !

Summer laughs in the air !

Lazarus laughs !

LAZARUS (*on a final note of compelling exultation*). Laugh ! Laugh with me ! Death is dead !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Fear is no more ! There is only life ! There is only laughter !

CHORUS (*chanting exultingly now*). Laugh !
Laugh !

Laugh with Lazarus !

Fear is no more !

There is no death !

(*They laugh in a rhythmic cadence dominated by the laughter of Lazarus.*)

CROWD (*who, gradually, joining in by groups or one by one—including Lazarus' family with the exception of Miriam, who does not laugh but watches and listens to his laughter with a tender smile of being happy in his happiness—have now all begun to laugh in rhythm with the Chorus—in a great, full-throated pæan as the laughter of Lazarus rises higher and higher*). Laugh !

Laugh !

Fear is no more !

There is no death !

CHORUS. Laugh ! Laugh !

There is only life !

There is only laughter !

Fear is no more !

Death is dead !

CROWD (*in a rhythmic echo*). Laugh ! Laugh !

Death is dead !

There is only laughter !

(*The room rocks, the air outside throbs with the rhythmic beat of their liberated*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

laughter—still a bit uncertain of its freedom, harsh, discordant, frenzied, desperate and drunken, but dominated and inspired by the high, free, aspiring, exulting laughter of Lazarus.)

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *Some months later. Exterior of Lazarus' home in Bethany, now known as the House of Laughter. It is a clear bright night, the sky sparkling with stars. At the extreme front is a road. Between this and the house is a small raised terrace. The house is low, of one story only, its walls white. Four windows are visible with a closed door in the middle of the wall. Steps lead up to this door, and to the left of door a flight of stairs goes up to the balustraded roof. The windows shine brilliantly with the flickering light of many candles which gives them a throbbing star-like effect. From within comes the sound of flutes and dance music. The dancers can be seen whirling swiftly by the windows. There is continually an overtone of singing laughter emphasizing the pulsing rhythm of the dance.*

On the road in the foreground, at left and right, two separate groups of Jews are gathered. They are not divided according to sex as in the previous scene. Each is composed about equally

LAZARUS LAUGHED

of men and women, forty-nine in each, masked and costumed as before. It is religious belief that now divides them. The adherents of Jesus, the Nazarenes, among whom may be noted Martha and Mary, are on the left; the Orthodox, among whom are Lazarus' Father and Mother and a Priest, are at right. Between the two hostile groups is the same Chorus of Old Men, in a formation like a spearhead, whose point is placed at the foot of the steps leading to the terrace. All these people are staring fascinatedly at the house, listening entranced, their feet moving, their bodies swaying to the music's beat, stiffly, constrainedly, compelled against their wills. Then the music suddenly stops and the chant of youthful voices is heard :

FOLLOWERS OF LAZARUS (*from within the house*).

Laugh ! Laugh !

There is only life !

There is only laughter !

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*as if they were subjects moved by hypnotic suggestion—miserably and discordantly*). Ha-ha-ha-ha !

There is only laughter !

Ha-ha——

CROWD (*in the same manner*). Ha-ha——

MARY. Ha— (*Then frantically—half-weeping with indignation rage—to the Nazarenes.*) Stop ! Oh, how can we laugh ! We are betraying Jesus ! My brother Lazarus has become a devil !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

THE ORTHODOX PRIEST (*his mask is that of a religious fanatic. He is sixty or so.*) Ha—ha—
(Tearing his beard and stamping with rage.) Stop it, you fools ! It is a foul sin in the sight of Jehovah ! Why do you come here every night to listen and watch their abominations ? The Lord God will punish you !

MARY (*echoing him—to her people*). Jesus will never forgive you !

THE PRIEST (*angrily*). Jesus ?

(He turns to look at the Nazarenes disdainfully and spits on the ground insultingly.)

(The members of the two groups begin to glare at each other. The Chorus falls back, three on each side, leaving one neutral figure before the steps. The Priest goes on tauntingly.)

Did you hear her, friends ? These renegade Nazarenes will soon deny they are Jews at all ! They will begin to worship in filthy idolatry the sun and stars and man's body—as Lazarus is there (*points to the house*), the disciple of their Jesus, has so well set them the example !

(This is followed by an outburst of insulting shouts of accusation and denial from both sides.)

A NAZARENE (*the Fourth Guest of Scene One*). You lie ! Lazarus is no disciple ! He is a traitor to Jesus ! We scorn him !

PRIEST (*sneeringly*). But your pretended Mes-

LAZARUS LAUGHED

siah did not scorn him. According to your stupid lies, he raised him from the dead ! And answer me, has your Jesus ever denied Lazarus, or denounced his laughter ? No ! No doubt he is laughing, too, at all you credulous fools—for if Lazarus is not his disciple, in the matter of the false miracle he was his accomplice !

(This provokes a furious protest from the Nazarenes and insulting hoots and jeers from the Orthodox, penetrated by a piercing scream from Lazarus' Mother, who, crushed in the crowd, sinks fainting to the ground. The Father bends over her. The group of the Orthodox falls back from them. With frightened cries Martha and Mary run from the group of Nazarenes and kneel beside her.)

FATHER (*pitifully*). Rachel ! Darling ! Speak to me !

MARTHA (*practically*). She has only fainted.

MARY. She is opening her eyes ! Mother, dear !

MOTHER (*weakly*). Did I fall ? (*Recognizing Martha and Mary*.) Martha—and Mary—my dear ones ! (*They embrace her, weeping*.) I have not kissed you since you left home to follow that Jesus— Oh, if we were only at home again—and if, also, my poor boy, Lazarus— (*She sobs*.)

FATHER (*gruffly*). You must not speak of him !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

MARTHA. Do not worry your head about Lazarus. He is not worth it !

MARY (*with surprising vindictiveness*). He is accursed ! He has betrayed our Lord !

PRIEST (*to those around him—mockingly*). Do you hear ? They already call the Nazarene “Lord” ! A Lord who is in the common prison at Jerusalem, I heard to-day ! A fine Lord whom our High Priests have had arrested like a thief !

MARY (*with fanatic fervour*). He is a king ! Whenever He chooses He will gather a great army and He will seize His kingdom and all who deny Him shall be crucified !

PRIEST (*tauntingly*). Now their jail-bird is a king, no less ! Soon they will make him a god, as the Romans do their Cæsars !

MARY (*her eyes flashing*). He is the Messiah !

PRIEST (*furiously*). The Messiah ! May Jehovah smite you in your lies ! Step back among your kind ! You defile us ! (*As she stands defiantly he appeals to the Father.*) Have you no authority ? She called him the Messiah —that common beggar, that tramp ! Curse her !

FATHER (*confused, pitifully harried, collecting his forces*). Wait ! Go back, Mary ! You chose to follow that impostor——

MARY (*defiantly*). The Messiah !

MARTHA (*trying to calm her*). Ssssh ! Remember he is our father !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

MARY (*fanatically*). I deny him ! I deny all who deny Jesus !

MOTHER (*tearfully*). And me, darling?

MARY. You must come to us, Mother ! You must believe in Jesus and leave all to follow Him !

FATHER (*enraged*). So ! You want to steal your mother away, to leave me lonely in my old age ! You are an unnatural daughter ! I disown you ! Go, before I curse—

MOTHER (*beseechingly*). Father !

MARTHA (*pulling Mary away*). Mary ! Jesus teaches to be kind.

MARY (*hysterically*). He teaches to give up all and follow Him ! I want to give Him everything ! I want my father to curse me !

FATHER (*frenziedly*). Then I do curse you ! No—not you—but the devil in you ! And the devil in Martha ! And the great mocking devil that dwells in Lazarus and laughs from his mouth ! I curse these devils and that Prince of Devils, that false prophet, Jesus ! It is he who has brought division to my home and many homes that were happy before. I curse him ! I curse the day he called my good son, Lazarus, from the grave to walk again with a devil inside him ! It was not my son who came back but a devil ! My son is dead ! And you, my daughters, are dead ! I am the father only of devils ! (*His voice has risen to a wailing lament.*) My children are dead !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS (*his voice rings from within the house in exultant denial*). Death is dead ! There is only laughter ! (*He laughs.*)

(*The voices of all his Followers echo his laughter. They pour in a laughing rout from the doorway on to the terrace. At the same moment the Chorus of Followers appears on the roof and forms along the balustrade, facing front.*)

(*These Followers of Lazarus, forty-nine in number, composed about equally of both sexes, wear a mask that, while recognizably Jewish, is a Lazarus mask, resembling him in its expression of fearless faith in life, the mouth shaped by laughter. The Chorus of Followers, seven in number, all men, have identical masks of double size, as before. The Period of all these masks is anywhere between Youth and Manhood (or Womanhood).*)

(*The music continues to come from within. Laughing, the Followers dance to it in weaving patterns on the terrace. They are dressed in bright-coloured diaphanous robes. Their chorused laughter, now high and clear, now dying to a humming murmur, stresses the rhythmic flow of the dance.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS. Laugh ! Laugh !
There is no death !
There is only laughter !

FOLLOWERS. There is only laughter !
Death is dead !
Laugh ! Laugh !

CROWD (*the two groups of Nazarenes and Orthodox, on the appearance of the Followers, immediately forget their differences and form into one mob, led by their Chorus of Old Men, whose jeering howls they echo as one voice.*). Yaah ! Yaah ! Yaah !

(*But they cannot keep it up. The music and laughter rise above their hooting. They fall into silence. Then they again begin to feel impelled by the rhythm and laughter, their feet move, their bodies sway. Their lips quiver, their mouths open as if to laugh. Their Chorus of Old Men are the first to be affected. It is as if this reaction were transmitted through the Chorus to the Crowd.*)

PRIEST (*his mouth twitching—fighting against the compulsion in him—stammers*). Brothers—listen—we must unite—in one cause—to—stamp out—this abomination !

(*It is as if he can no longer control his speech. He presses his hand over his mouth convulsively.*)

AN AGED ORTHODOX JEW (*the Seventh Guest of Scene One—starts to harangue the crowd. He*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

fights the spell but cannot control his jerking body nor his ghastly, spasmodic laughter). Neighbours ! Our young people are corrupted ! They are leaving our farms—to dance and sing ! To laugh ! Ha—! Laugh at everything ! Ha-ha—— ! (*He struggles desperately to control himself.*)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*a barking laugh forced from them*). Ha-ha—— !

CROWD (*echoing this*). Ha-ha—— !

THE AGED JEW. They have no respect for life ! When I said in kindness, “ You must go back to work,” they laughed at me ! Ha— ! “ We desire joy. We go to Lazarus,” they said—and left my fields ! I begged them to stay—with tears in my eyes ! I even offered them more money ! They laughed ! “ What is money ? Can the heart eat gold ? ” They laughed at money ! Ha-ha—— ! (*He chokes with exasperated rage.*)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*echoing him*). Ha-ha—— !

CROWD (*echoing the Chorus*). Ha-ha—— !

AGED JEW (*shaking his fist at Lazarus’ Followers*). That loafer taught them that ! They come to him and work for nothing ! For nothing ! And they are glad, these undutiful ones ! While they sow, they dance ! They sing to the earth when they are ploughing ! They tend his flocks and laugh toward the sun ! Ha-ha-ha—— ! (*He struggles again.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*as before*). Ha-ha-ha——
CROWD (*as before*). Ha-ha-ha——

AGED JEW. How can we compete with labour
for laughter ! We will have no harvest. There
will be no food ! Our children will starve !
Our race will perish ! And he will laugh !
Ha-ha-ha-ha ! (*He howls with furious, uncon-
strained laughter.*)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*echoing his tone*). Our
children will starve !
Our race will perish !
Lazarus laughs !
Ha-ha-ha-ha ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !

CROWD (*as before*). Ha-ha-ha-ha ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !

(*Their former distinctions of Nazarenes and
Orthodox are now entirely forgotten.
The members of Lazarus' family are
grouped in the centre as if nothing had
ever happened to separate them. The
Chorus of Old Men is again joined in
its spearhead formation at the stairs.
Apparent first in this Chorus, a queer
excitement begins to pervade this mob.
They begin to weave in and out, clasping
each other's hands now and then, mov-
ing mechanically in jerky steps to the
music in a grotesque sort of marionettes'
country dance. At first this is slow but
it momentarily becomes more hectic and
peculiar. They raise clenched fists or
hands distended into threatening talons.*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Their voices sound thick and harsh and animal-like with anger as they mutter and growl, each one aloud to himself or herself.)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*threateningly, gradually rising to hatred*). Hear them laugh !

See them dance !

Shameless ! Wanton !

Dirty ! Evil !

Infamous ! Bestial !

Madness ! Blood !

Adultery ! Murder !

We burn !

We kill !

We crucify !

Death ! Death !

Beware, Lazarus ! (*This last in a wild frenzy.*)

CROWD (*frenziedly*). Beware, Lazarus !

We burn ! We kill !

We crucify !

Death ! Death !

(*They crowd toward the gateway, their arms stretched out as if demanding Lazarus for a sacrificial victim. Meanwhile they never cease to hop up and down, to mill around, to twist their bodies toward and away from each other in bestial parody of the dance of the Followers.*)

(*The tall figure of Lazarus, dressed in a white robe, suddenly appears on the roof of the house. He stands at the balus-*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

trade in the middle of the Chorus. Beside him, a little behind, Miriam appears dressed in black, her face upturned, her lips praying. She appears to have grown older, to be forty now. Lazarus' body is softly illuminated by its inner light. The change in him is marked. He seems ten years younger, at the prime of forty. His body has become less angular and stiff. His movements are graceful and pliant. The change is even more noticeable in his face, which has filled out, become purer in outline, more distinctly Grecian. His complexion is the red-brown of rich earth, the grey in his black, curly beard has almost disappeared.)

(He makes a sign and the music ceases. His Followers remain fixed in their dancing attitudes like figures in a frieze. Each member of the mob remains frozen in a distorted posture. He stares down at the mob pityingly, his face calm.)

LAZARUS (speaks amid a profound silence. His voice releases his own dancers and the mob from their fixed attitudes. The music begins to play again within the house, very soft and barely audible, swelling up and down like the sound of an organ from a distant church). You laugh, but your laughter is guilty ! It laughs a hyena laughter, spotted, howling its hungry fear of life ! That day I

LAZARUS LAUGHED

returned did I not tell you your fear was no more, that there is no death? You believed then—for a moment! You laughed—discordantly, hoarsely, but with a groping toward joy. What! Have you so soon forgotten, that now your laughter curses life again as of old? (*He pauses—then sadly.*) That is your tragedy! You forget! You forget the God in you! You wish to forget! Remembrance would imply the high duty to live as a son of God—generously!—with love!—with pride!—with laughter! This is too glorious a victory for you, too terrible a loneliness! Easier to forget, to become only a man, the son of a woman, to hide from life against her breast, to whimper your fear to her resigned heart and be comforted by her resignation! To live by denying life! (*Then exhortingly.*) Why are your eyes always either fixed on the ground in weariness of thought, or watching one another with suspicion? Throw your gaze upward! To Eternal Life! To the fearless and deathless! The everlasting! To the stars! (*He stretches out his arms to the sky—then suddenly points.*) See! A new star has appeared! It is the one that shone over Bethlehem! (*His voice becomes a little bitter and mocking.*) The Master of Peace and Love has departed this earth. Let all stars be for you henceforth symbols of Saviours—Sons of God who appeared on worlds like ours to tell the saving truth to ears like yours, inexorably deaf! (*Then exaltedly.*) But the greatness of Saviours is that they may not save! The greatness of

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Man is that no god can save him—until he becomes a god !

(*He stares up at the stars, rapt in contemplation, oblivious to all around him now.*)

(*Rapidly approaching from the left a man's voice jarring in high-pitched cruel laughter is heard. They all listen, huddled together like sheep.*)

MESSENGER (*the Third Guest of Scene One rushes in breathlessly, shouting*). The Nazarene has been crucified !

PRIEST (*with fierce triumph*). Jehovah is avenged ! Hosanna !

ORTHODOX. Hosanna ! The false prophet is dead ! The pretended Messiah is dead !

(*They jump and dance, embracing one another. The Nazarenes stand paralysed and stunned. The two groups mechanically separate to right and left again, the Chorus of Old Men dividing itself as before.*)

MARY (*in a frenzy of grief*). Do not believe him ! Jesus could not die !

(*But at this moment a Nazarene youth, exhausted by grief and tears, staggers in from the left.*)

MESSENGER (*Second Guest of Scene One*). Jesus is dead ! Our Lord is murdered !

(*He sinks on his knees sobbing. All the*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Nazarenes do likewise, wailing, rending their garments, tearing their hair, some even beating their heads on the ground in the agony of their despair.)

MARY (*insane with rage now*). They have murdered Him ! (*To her followers—savagely.*) An eye for an eye ! Avenge the Master !

(Their frenzy of grief turned into rage, the Nazarenes leap to their feet threateningly. Concealed swords and knives are brought out by both sides.)

MIRIAM (*leaning over the balustrade—in a voice of entreaty*). Mary ! Brothers !

(But none heed her or seem to see her. Lazarus and his Followers remain oblivious to men, arms upstretched toward the stars, their heads thrown back.)

MARY (*wildly*). Vengeance ! Death to His murderers !

PRIEST (*fiercely to his followers*). Death to the Nazarenes !

(With cries of rage the two groups rush on one another. There is a confused tumult of yells, groans, curses, the shrieks of women, the sounds of blows as they meet in a pushing, whirling, struggling mass in which individual figures are indistinguishable. Knives and swords flash above the heads of the mass, hands in every tense attitude

LAZARUS LAUGHED

of striking, clutching, tearing are seen upraised. As the fight is at its height a Roman Centurion and a squad of eight Soldiers come tramping up at the double-quick. They all are masked. These Roman masks now and henceforth in the play are carried out according to the same formula of Seven Periods, Seven Types, as those of the Jews seen previously, except that the basis of each face is Roman—heavy, domineering, self-complacent, the face of a confident dominant race. The Centurion differs from his soldiers only in being more individualized. He is middle-aged, his soldiers belong to the Period of Manhood. All are of the Simple, Ignorant Type.)

CENTURION (*shouts commandingly*). Disperse ! (But no one hears him—with angry disgust to his Soldiers.) Charge ! Cut them down !

(The Soldiers form a wedge and charge with a shout. They soon find it necessary to use their swords, and strike down everyone in their way.)

MIRIAM. Mercy, Romans ! (As they pay no attention to her, in desperation she embraces Lazarus beseechingly, forcing his attention back to earth.) Lazarus ! Mercy !

LAZARUS (*looks down upon the struggling mass and cries in a ringing voice*). Hold !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*Each person stands transfixed, frozen in the last movement, even the Roman Soldiers and the Centurion himself. Ten dead and mortally wounded lie on the ground, trampled by the feet of friend and foe alike. Lazarus looks at the Crowd. To each he seems to look at him or her alone. His eyes are accusing and stern. As one head, the heads of all are averted. Even the Centurion stares at the ground humbly, in spite of himself. Finally Lazarus speaks in a voice of infinite disdain.*)

Sometimes it is hard to laugh—even at men !

(*He turns his eyes from them, staring straight before him. This seems to release them from their fixed positions. The Nazarenes and the Orthodox separate and slink guiltily apart. The Chorus of Old Men forms again, the apex at the centre of the steps as before. A low wail of lamentation arises from them. The two crowds of Nazarenes and Orthodox echo this.*)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*in a wailing chant*). Woe unto Israel !

Woe unto thee, Jerusalem !
O divided house,
Thou shalt crumble to dust,
And swine shall root
Where thy Temple stood !
Woe unto us !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CROWD (*in a great echoing cry*). Woe unto us !

CENTURION (*gruffly to hide his embarrassment at being awed by Lazarus*). Here, you ! Drag your carcasses away ! (*From each side men and women come forward to identify and mourn their dead. The wail of lamentation rises and falls. The Centurion looks up at Lazarus—harshly.*) You, there ! Are you he whom they call the Laugher ?

LAZARUS (*without looking at him—his voice seeming to come from some dream within him*). I am Lazarus.

CENTURION. Who was brought back from death by enchantment ?

LAZARUS (*looking down at him now—with a smile, simply*). No. There is no death !

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS (*chanting joyously*). There is no death !

FOLLOWERS (*echoing*). There is no death !

AN ORTHODOX MAN (*bending beside the body of Lazarus' father*). Here is your father, Lazarus. He is dead.

AN ORTHODOX WOMAN. This is your mother, Lazarus. She is dead.

A NAZARENE. Here is your sister, Martha, Lazarus. She is dead.

A NAZARENE WOMAN. And this is Mary, Lazarus. She is dead.

MIRIAM (*suddenly—with deep grief*). And Jesus who was the Son of Man, who loved you and gave you life again, has died, Lazarus—has died !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS (*in a great triumphant voice*). Yes ! Yes !! Yes !!! Men die ! Even a Son of Man must die to show men that Man may live ! But there is no death !

CENTURION (*at first in a tone of great awe—to his Soldiers*). Is he a god ? (*Then gruffly, ashamed of his question.*) Come down, Jew ! I have orders to bring you to Rome to Cæsar !

LAZARUS (*as if he were answering not the Centurion but the command of his fate from the sky*). Yes ! (*He walks down the narrow stairs and, Miriam following him, comes down the path to the road. He goes and kneels for a moment each beside the bodies of his Father, Mother, and Sisters, and kisses each in turn on the forehead. For a moment the struggle with his grief can be seen in his face. Then he looks up to the stars and, as if answering a question, again says simply and acceptingly*). Yes ! (*Then exultantly.*) Yes !! (*And begins to laugh from the depths of his exalted spirit. The laughter of his Chorus and then of his Followers echoes his. The music and dancing begin again.*)

(*The Centurion grins sheepishly. The Soldiers chuckle. The Centurion laughs awkwardly. The Soldiers laugh. The music from the house and the laughter of the Followers grow louder. The infection spreads to the Chorus of Old Men whose swaying grief falls into the rhythm of the laughter and music as does that of the mourners.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS' FOLLOWERS (*led by their Chorus*).
Laugh ! Laugh !

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*torn by the conflict—torturedly*). Ha-ha-ha—

Woe to us, woe !

CROWD (*beside the bodies*). Woe to us, woe !
Ha-ha— !

CENTURION (*laughingly*). You are brave, you Laugher ! Remember Tiberius never laughs ! And boast not to Cæsar there is no death, or he will invent a new one for you !

LAZARUS (*with a smile*). But all death is men's invention ! So laugh !

(*He laughs, and the Centurion and Soldiers laugh with him, half dancing clumsily now to the beat of the music.*)

CHORUS OF LAZARUS' FOLLOWERS. Laugh !
Laugh !

Fear is no more !

There is no death !

There is only life !

There is only laughter !

FOLLOWERS (*dancing*). Laugh ! Laugh !
Fear is no more !
Death is dead !

CHORUS OF OLD MEN (*forgetting their grief—their eyes on Lazarus now, their arms outstretched to him as are those of the crowd grouped around the bodies but forgetting them*). Death is no more !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Death is dead !

Laugh !

CROWD. Laugh ! Laugh !
Death is no more !

CENTURION (*laughing, to his laughing Soldiers*).
Forward !

(*They tramp, dancing, off.*)

(*Lazarus and Miriam start to follow.*)

MIRIAM (*suddenly pointing to his Followers who are dancing and laughing obviously—pityingly*). But your faithful ones who love you, Lazarus ?

LAZARUS (*simply, with a trace of a sad sternness*). This is their test. Their love must remember—or it must forget. Come !

(*With a last gesture back like a blessing on all he is leaving, he goes. The laughter of the Soldiers recedes. That of the Chorus of Old Men and of the Crowd falters and breaks into lamenting grief again, guilt-stricken because of its laughter.*)

CHORUS OF OLD MEN. Laugh ! Laugh !
Death is dead !

Laugh !—But woe !

There lie our dead !

Oh shame and guilt !

We forget our dead !

CROWD (*with fierce remorseful grief*). Woe to us, woe !

There lie our dead !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CHORUS OF LAZARUS' FOLLOWERS (*their voices and the music growing more and more hesitating and faint*). Laugh ! Laugh !

There is only life !

There is only—

Laugh— (*Their dance is faltering and slow now.*)

Fear is no—

Death is—

Laugh—

(*The music and dancing and voices cease.*

The lights in the windows, which have been growing dim, go out. There is a second of complete, death-like silence.

The mourning folk in the foreground are frozen figures of grief. Then a sudden swelling chorus of forlorn bewilderment, a cry of lost children, comes from the Chorus of Followers and the Followers themselves. They huddle into groups on the roof and on the terrace. They stretch their arms out in every direction supplicatingly.)

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS. Oh, Lazarus, laugh !

Do not forsake us !

We forget !

Where is thy love fled ?

Give back thy laughter,
Thy fearless laughter !

We forget !

FOLLOWERS. Give back thy laughter !

We forget !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS (*with dull, resigned terror now*). Death slinks out
Of his grave in the heart !
Ghosts of fear
Creep back in the brain !
We remember fear !
We remember death !

FOLLOWERS. Death in the heart !
Fear in the brain !
We remember fear !
We remember death !

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS (*wailing hopelessly now*).
Forgotten is laughter !
We remember
Only death !
Fear is God !
Forgotten is laughter !
Life is death !

FOLLOWERS. Forgotten is laughter !
Life is death !

ALL (*the Chorus of Old Men and the Crowd joining in*). Life is a fearing,
A long dying,
From birth to death !
God is a slayer !
Life is death !

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *Some months later. A square in Athens about ten o'clock at night. In the rear, pure and beautiful in the light of a full moon, is the façade of a temple.* An excited crowd of Greeks of both sexes is gathered in the square as if for some public festival. They are masked according to the scheme of Seven Periods in Seven Types of Character for each sex. Here, of course, the foundation of the mask is the Grecian type of face.

On the left, the Chorus of Greeks is grouped, seven in number, facing front, in the spearhead formation. As before, the Chorus wears masks double the life size of the Crowd masks. They are all of the Proud Self-Reliant type, in the period of Young Manhood.

These seven are clad in goat skins, their tanned bodies and masks daubed and stained with wine lees, in imitation of the old followers of Dionysus. Rumour has led them to hope and believe that Lazarus may be the reincarnation of this deity.

The people in the crowd are holding themselves in restraint with difficulty, they stir and push about restlessly with an eager curiosity and impatience. All eyes are fixed off left. A buzz of voices hums in the air.

Acting as police, a number of Roman legionaries (masked like the soldiers of Scene

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Two) armed with staves, keep back the crowd from the line of the street that runs from left to right, front. They resent this duty, which has already kept them there a long time, and are surly and quick-tempered with the Greeks.

At front, pacing impatiently up and down, is a young Roman noble of twenty-one, clad richly, wearing beautifully wrought armour and helmet. This is Gaius, the heir of Tiberius Cæsar, nicknamed *Caligula* by the soldiers, in whose encampments he was born and where he spent his childhood. His body is bony and angular, almost malformed with wide, powerful shoulders and long arms and hands, and short, skinny, hairy legs like an ape's. He wears a half-mask of crimson, dark with a purplish tinge, that covers the upper part of his face to below the nose. This mask accentuates his bulging, prematurely wrinkled forehead, his hollow temples and his bulbous, sensual nose. His large troubled eyes, of a glazed greenish-blue, glare out with a shifty feverish suspicion at every one. Below his mask his own skin is of an anæmic transparent pallor. Above it, his hair is the curly blond hair of a child of six or seven. His mouth also is childish, the red lips soft and feminine in outline. Their expression is spoiled, petulant and self-obsessed, weak but domineering. In combination with the rest of the face there is an appalling morbid significance to his mouth. One feels that its boyish cruelty, encouraged as a manly attribute

LAZARUS LAUGHED

in the coarse brutality of camps, has long ago become naïvely insensitive to any human suffering but its own.

Walking with Caligula is Cneius Crassus, a Roman general—a squat, muscular man of sixty, his mask that of a heavy battered face full of coarse humour.

CHORUS OF GREEKS (*intoning solemnly*). Soon
the God comes !

Redeemer and Saviour !

Dionysus, Son of Man and a God !

GREEK CROWD (*echoing*). Soon the God comes !
Redeemer and Saviour !

Dionysus !

FIRST GREEK. They say an unearthly flame
burns in this Lazarus !

SECOND GREEK. The sacred fire ! He must
be the Fire-born, the son of Zeus !

THIRD GREEK. Many who have seen him
swear he is Dionysus, re-arisen from Hades !

FOURTH GREEK (*importantly*). I saw Lazarus at
Antioch where the galley on which they were
taking him to Rome had been thrice blown back
by a storm. Fear of this warning omen is why
they now march with him by land.

FIRST GREEK. Does he truly resemble a god ?

FOURTH GREEK (*impressively*). One look in his
eyes while his laughter sings in your ears and you
forget sorrow ! You dance ! You laugh ! It
is as if a heavy weight you had been carrying

LAZARUS LAUGHED

all your life without knowing it suddenly were lifted. You are like a cloud, you can fly, your mind reels with laughter, you are drunk with joy ! (*Solemnly.*) Take my word for it, he is indeed a god. Everywhere the people have acclaimed him. He heals the sick, he raises the dead, by laughter.

SEVENTH GREEK. But I have heard that when he has gone people cannot remember his laughter, that the dead are dead again and the sick die, and the sad grow more sorrowful.

FIFTH GREEK. Well, we shall soon see with our own eyes. But why should the god return in the body of a Jew ?

SIXTH GREEK. What better disguise if he wishes to remain unknown ? The fools of Romans will never suspect him !

THIRD GREEK (*laughing*). Never ! They are beginning to claim he is a Roman !

FIFTH GREEK. So much the better ! He will be in their confidence !

FOURTH GREEK. He will lead us against Rome ! He will laugh our tyrants into the sea ! Ha !

(*He turns toward the Romans and laughs sneeringly. This is taken up by the Crowd—unpleasant, resentful laughter. They push forward aggressively and almost sweep the Soldiers from their feet.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CRASSUS (*angrily*). Drive them back !

CALIGULA (*suddenly with a distorted warped smile*). Order them to use their swords, Cneius. Let the scum look at their dead and learn respect for us !

SOLDIERS (*shoving and whacking*). Back ! Step back ! Back there !

(*The crowd push back to their former line. There are muttered curses, groans, protests, which subside into the former hum of expectancy.*)

CALIGULA (*with the same smile*). The sword, my old hyena ! Corpses are so educational !

CRASSUS (*surlily*). I would like to, I promise you ! When I see how they hate us——!

CALIGULA (*carelessly*). Let them hate—so long as they fear us ! We must keep death dangling (*he makes the gesture of doing so*) before their eyes ! (*He gives a soft, cruel laugh.*) Will you not sacrifice in my honour ? What are a few Greeks ? (*Queerly.*) I like to watch men die.

CRASSUS. I dare not, Caligula. Cæsar has forbidden bloodshed.

CALIGULA. Tiberius is a miser. He wants to hoard all of death for his own pleasure ! (*He laughs again.*)

CRASSUS (*with rough familiarity*). I wager no one will make that complaint against you when you are Cæsar ! (*He chuckles.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*with the sudden grandiose posturing of a bad actor unintentionally burlesquing grandeur*). When I, Gaius Caligula, am Cæsar, I— (*Then superstitiously looking up at the sky with cringing foreboding*). But it brings bad luck to anticipate fate. (*He takes off his helmet and spits in it—then with a grim smile.*) The heirs of a Cæsar take sick so mysteriously ! Even with you who used to ride me on your knee, I do not eat nor drink until you have tasted first.

CRASSUS (*nodding approvingly*). You are sensible. I suppose I, too, have my price—if they were only clever enough to discover it ! (*He laughs hoarsely.*)

CALIGULA (*steps back from him with an uneasy shudder*). You are honest, at least—too honest, Cneius ! (*Grimly.*) If my father Germanicus had had you for his counsellor, he might have escaped their poison. (*Then gloomily.*) I must fear everyone. The world is my enemy.

CRASSUS. Kill it then ! (*He laughs again.*)

CHORUS (*stretching out their arms in the direction from which Lazarus is expected—suppliantly*). Son of the Lightning !

Deadly thy vengeance !
Swift thy deliverance !
Beholding thy Mother,
Greece, our Mother,
Her beauty in bondage,
Her pride in chains !
Hasten, Redeemer !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CROWD (*as before—echoing the chant*). Hasten,
Redeemer !

Son of the Lightning !
Deadly thy vengeance !
Swift thy deliverance !

CALIGULA (*disdainfully*). What clods ! Mob
is the same everywhere, eager to worship any new
charlatan ! They have already convinced them-
selves this Lazarus is a reincarnation of Dionysus !
A Jew become a god ! By the breasts of Venus
that is a miracle. ! (*He laughs.*)

CRASSUS (*seriously*). But he must be expert in
magic. He was buried four days and came out
unharmed. Maybe he is not a Jew. Some say
his father was really a legionary of our garrison
in Judea. And he teaches people to laugh at
death. That smacks of Roman blood !

CALIGULA (*ironically*). Better still ! He tells
them there is no death at all ! Hence the
multitude of fools who have acclaimed him
everywhere since he left his own country—and
why Tiberius has begun to fear his influence.

CRASSUS (*sententiously*). Whom Cæsar fears—
disappears !

CALIGULA. Yes, the dupes who follow Lazarus
will be killed. But Tiberius believes this
Lazarus may know a cure for death or for renew-
ing youth, and the old lecher hopes he can worm
the secret out of him—before he kills him. (*He
laughs ironically, then disgustedly.*) That is why

LAZARUS LAUGHED

I must escort this Jew to Rome—as a special honour ! (*With fierce, haughty resentment.*) I, the heir of Cæsar ! (*Savagely.*) Oh, if I were Cæsar——!

CRASSUS (*with a coarse, meaning smirk*). Patience. Tiberius is old.

CALIGULA (*suddenly becoming terribly uneasy at some thought*). Cneius ! What if this Lazarus has really discovered a cure for old age and should reveal it to Tiberius ! (*His lips tremble, his eyes are terrified, he shrinks against Crassus for protection—with boyish pleading.*) Oh, Cneius, what could I do then ?

CRASSUS (*matter-of-factly*). Kill him before Cæsar can talk to him.

CALIGULA (*almost in tears*). But if he knows a charm against death, how could he be slain, old fool ?

CRASSUS (*gruffly*). Bah ! (*Then with grim humour*) Death in bed I suspect, but when men are killed I know they stay dead ! (*Disgustedly*) A moment ago you were laughing at him ! (*Scornfully*) Do you fear him now ?

CALIGULA (*rather shamefacedly pulls himself together—then broodingly*). I fear every one who lives. Even you. As you advised me. (*He turns away*.)

CRASSUS (*contemptuously*). Well, maybe he can teach you to laugh at fear. You would welcome him then, eh, cry baby ?

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*with sudden passionate intensity but only half aloud, as if to himself*). I would love him, Cneius ! As a father ! As a god !

(*He stands staring before him strangely, There is a new stir from the crowd, who again push forward.*)

CRASSUS (*pointing off right*). Look ! I see a great crowd ! Your Lazarus must be coming at last !

CHORUS (*chanting in a deep rhythmic monotone, like the rising and falling cadences of waves on a beach*). He comes, the Redeemer and Saviour !

Laughing along the mountains !
To give back our lost laughter,
To raise from the dead our freedom,
To free us from Rome !

CROWD (*echoing this chant*). Fire-born ! Redeemer ! Saviour !

Raise from the dead our freedom !
Give back our lost laughter !
Free us from Rome !

(*They have been pushing forward, more and more fiercely and defiantly. The Roman Soldiers in spite of their efforts are pushed backward step by step.*)

SOLDIERS (*angrily*). Back ! Back !

(*The Soldiers work with a will, dealing out blows with their staves at every one in reach. But now these blows seem only*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

to infuriate the Crowd, which steadily pushes them back into the street. At the same time the distant sound of exultant music, singing and laughter becomes steadily louder. Both Soldiers and Crowd are inspired to battle by these strains without their knowing it. Caligula is listening spell-bound, his mouth open, his body swaying and twitching. Even Crassus stares off at the oncomers, forgetful of the growing plight of his Soldiers.)

CROWD (*led by their Chorus—angrily*). Cowards !
Pigs !

Strike ! Hit !
Stones ! Knives !
Stab ! Kill !
Death to the Romans !
Death !

A SOLDIER (*alarmed, calls to Crassus*). General !
Let us use our swords !

SOLDIERS (*enraged—eagerly*). Yes ! Swords !

CROWD. Death !

CRASSUS (*turning—uneasy, but afraid to give any drastic order*). Bah ! Staves are enough. Crack their skulls !

CROWD (*led by the Chorus—defiantly*). Death to Crassus !

Drunkard ! Coward !
Death to him !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(They continue to push forward, hooting and jeering.)

CRASSUS (exploding for a second). By the gods—! (To the Soldiers.) Draw your swords!

(The troops do so eagerly. The Crowd sag back momentarily with exclamations of fear.)

CALIGULA (listening as in a trance to the music and what is going on behind him—in a queer whisper). Kill, Cneius ! Let me dance ! Let me sing ! (The music and crashing of cymbals and the ferment of passions around him cause him to lose all control over himself. He gives a crazy leap in the air and begins to dance grotesquely and chant in a thick voice.) He is coming ! Death, the Deliverer ! Kill, soldiers ! I command you ! I, Caligula ! I will be Cæsar ! Death !

CROWD (led by the Chorus—savage now). Beast ! Cur !

Death to Caligula !

(They crowd forward.)

CALIGULA (drawing his sword and flourishing it drunkenly—his eyes glazed). Death !

CRASSUS (drawing his own sword in a frenzy). Strike ! Death !

(His Soldiers raise their swords. The Crowd have raised whatever weapons they have found—knives, clubs, daggers, stones, bare fists.)

HORRIS (chanting fiercely). Death !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

ALL (*Romans and Greeks alike as one great voice*).
Death !

(*The chorused word beats down all sound into a stricken silence. The wild joyous music ceases. The Romans and Greeks seem to lean back from one another and collect strength to leap forward. At this moment the voice of Lazarus comes ringing through the air like a command from the sky.*)

LAZARUS. There is no death !

(*The Soldiers and Greeks remain frozen in their attitudes of murderous hate. Following his words the laughter of Lazarus is heard, exultant and gaily mocking, filling them with the sheepish shame of children caught in mischief. Their hands hang, their arms sink to their sides. The music starts once more with a triumphant clash of cymbals, Lazarus' laughter is echoed from the throats of the multitude of his Followers who now come dancing into the square, preceded by a band of masked musicians and by their Chorus.*)

(*This Chorus wears, in double size, the laughing mask of Lazarus' Followers in the same Period and Type as in the preceding scene, except that here the mask of each member of the Chorus has a different racial basis—Egyptian,*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Syrian, Cappadocian, Lydian, Phrygian, Cilician, Parthian. The Followers are costumed and masked as in the preceding scene, seven Types in seven Periods, except that, as in the Chorus, racially there are many nations represented. All have wreaths of ivy in their hair, and flowers in their hands which they scatter about. They whirl in between the Soldiers and Crowd, forcing them back from each other, teasing them, sifting into the Crowd, their Chorus in a half-circle, confronting the Chorus of Greeks.)

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS. Laugh ! Laugh !
There is no death !
There is only life !
There is only laughter !

FOLLOWERS (echoing). Laugh ! Laugh !
There is no death !

(Caligula and Crassus are swept to one side, left. Then the cries and laughter of all become mingled into one exclamation :)

ALL. Lazarus ! Lazarus !

(The squad of Roman Soldiers led by the Centurion who had taken Lazarus prisoner, march in with dancers' steps, like a proud guard of honour now, laughing, pulling a chariot in which Lazarus stands dressed in a tunic of

LAZARUS LAUGHED

white and gold, his bronzed face and limbs radiant in the halo of his own glowing light.)

(Lazarus now looks less than thirty-five. His countenance now might well be that of the positive masculine Dionysus, closest to the soil of the Grecian gods, a Son of Man, born of a mortal. Not the coarse, drunken Dionysus, nor the effeminate god, but Dionysus in his middle period, more comprehensive in his symbolism, the soul of the recurring seasons, of living and dying as processes in eternal growth, of the wine of life stirring forever in the sap and blood and loam of things. Miriam is beside him, dressed in black, smiling the same sad tender smile, holding Lazarus' arm as if for protection and in protection. She appears older, a woman over forty-five.)

CHORUS OF GREEKS (*rushing to Lazarus' car*).

Hail, Dionysus !

Iacchus !

Lazarus !

Hail !

(They surround him, throw over his shoulders and head the finely dressed hide of a bull with great gilded horns, force into his right hand the mystic rod of Dionysus with a pine cone on top, then prostrate themselves.)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Hail, Saviour !
Redeemer !
Conqueror of Death !

ALL (*in a repeated chorus which finally includes even the Roman Soldiers, raising their arms to him.*) Hail, Lazarus !

Redeemer !
Hail !

(They are silent. Lazarus looks at them, seeming to see each and all at the same time, and his laughter, as if in answer to their greetings, is heard rising from his lips like a song.)

CRASSUS (*awed*). Look ! He is more than man !

CALIGULA (*trembling, in a queer agitation*). I dare not look !

CRASSUS. Do you hear his laughter ?

CALIGULA (*chokingly—puts his hands over his ears*). I will not hear !

CRASSUS. But you must welcome him in Cæsar's name !

CALIGULA (*his teeth chattering*). I must kill him !

LAZARUS (*looking directly at him—gaily mocking*). Death is dead, Caligula ! (He begins to laugh again softly.)

CALIGULA (*with an hysterical cry of defiant terror*). You lie ! (Sword in hand he whirls to confront

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Lazarus, but at the first sight of his face he stops in his tracks, trembling, held fascinated by Lazarus' eyes, mumbling with a last pitiful remainder of defiance.) But you lie—whatever you are ! I say there must be death ! (The sword has fallen to his side. He stares open-mouthed at Lazarus. There is something of a shy, wondering child about his attitude now. Lazarus looks at him, laughing with gentle understanding. Caligula suddenly drops his sword, and covering his face with his hands weeps like a boy who has been hurt.) You have murdered my only friend, Lazarus ! Death would have been my slave when I am Cæsar. He would have been my jester and made me laugh at fear ! (He weeps bitterly.)

LAZARUS (*gaily*). Be your own jester instead,
O Caligula ! Laugh at yourself, O Cæsar-to-be !

(*He laughs. The Crowd now all join in with him.*)

(*Caligula suddenly uncovers his face, grins his warped grin, gives a harsh cackle which cracks through the other laughter with a splitting discord, cuts a hopping caper like some grotesque cripple which takes him to the side of Lazarus' chariot, where he squats on his hams and, stretching out his hand, fingers Lazarus' robe inquisitively and stares up into his face in the attitude of a chained monkey.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*with a childish, mischievous curiosity*). Then if there is no death, O Teacher, tell me why I love to kill ?

'LAZARUS. Because you fear to die ! (*Then gaily mocking*.) But what do you matter, O Deathly-Important One ? Put yourself that question—as a jester ! (*Exultantly*.) Are you a speck of dust danced in the wind ? Then laugh, dancing ! Laugh yes to your insignificance ! Thereby will be born your new greatness ! As Man, Petty Tyrant of Earth, you are a bubble pricked by death into a void and a mocking silence ! But as dust, you are eternal change, and everlasting growth, and a high note of laughter soaring through chaos from the deep heart of God ! Be proud, O Dust ! Then you may love the stars as equals ! (*Then mockingly again*.) And then perhaps you may be brave enough to love even your fellow-men without fear of their vengeance !

CALIGULA (*dully*). I cannot understand. I hate men. I am afraid of their poison and their swords and the cringing envy in their eyes that only yields to fear !

LAZARUS (*gaily mocking*). Tragic is the plight of the tragedian whose only audience is himself ! Life is for each man a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors. Terrified is Caligula by the faces he makes ! But I tell you to laugh in the mirror, that seeing your life gay, you may begin to live as a guest, and not as a condemned one ! (*Raising his hands for silence—with a playful smile*.)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Listen ! In the dark peace of the grave the man called Lazarus rested. He was still weak, as one who recovers from a long illness—for, living, he had believed his life a sad one ! (*He laughs softly, and softly they all echo his laughter.*) He lay dreaming to the croon of silence, feeling as the flow of blood in his own veins the past re-enter the heart of God to be renewed by faith into the future. He thought : “ Men call this death ”—for he had been dead only a little while and he still remembered. Then, of a sudden, a strange gay laughter trembled from his heart as though his life, so long repressed in him by fear, had found at last its voice and a song for singing. “ Men call this death,” it sang. “ Men call life death and fear it. They hide from it in horror. Their lives are spent in hiding. Their fear becomes their living. They worship life as death ! ”

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS (*in a chanting echo*).

Men call life death and fear it.

They hide from it in horror.

Their lives are spent in hiding.

Their fear becomes their living.

They worship life as death !

LAZARUS. And here the song of Lazarus' life grew pitiful. “ Men must learn to live,” it mourned. “ Before their fear invented death they knew, but now they have forgotten. They must be taught to laugh again ! ” And Lazarus answered “ Yes ! ” (*He now addresses the crowd—especially Caligula, directly, laughingly.*) Thus

LAZARUS LAUGHED

sang his life to Lazarus while he lay dead ! Man must learn to live by laughter ! (*He laughs.*)

CHORUS OF FOLLOWERS. Laugh ! Laugh !
There is only life !
There is only laughter !
Fear is no more !
Death is dead !

CHORUS OF GREEKS. Laugh ! Laugh !
Hail, Dionysus !
Fear is no more !
Thou hast conquered death !

ALL (*laughing—in a great laughing chorus.*).
Laugh ! Laugh !
Fear is no more !
Death is dead !

LAZARUS (*as to a crowd of children—laughingly*).
Out with you ! Out into the woods ! Upon the hills ! Cities are prisons wherein man locks himself from life. Out with you under the sky ! Are the stars too pure for your sick passions ? Is the warm earth smelling of night too desirous of love for your pale introspective lusts ? Out ! Let laughter be your new clean lust and sanity ! So far man has only learned to snicker meanly at his neighbour ! Let a laughing away of self be your new right to live for ever ! Cry in your pride, “ I am Laughter, which is Life, which is the Child of God ! ”

(*He laughs, and again his voice leads and dominates the rhythmic chorus of theirs. The music and dancing begin again.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

THE TWO CHORUSES (*chanting in unison*). Laugh !

Laugh !

There is only God !

We are His Laughter !

ALL (*echoing*). There is only God !

We are His Laughter !

Laugh ! Laugh !

(*They take hold of his chariot traces, and as he had come, in the midst of a happy multitude, now augmented by all the Greeks, and the Roman Soldiers who had awaited him, dancing, playing, singing, laughing, he is escorted off. The noise of their passing recedes. Caligula and Crassus are left in the empty square, the former squatting on his hams, monkey-wise, and brooding sombrely.*)

CRASSUS (*is swaying and staggering, like a man in a drunken stupor, in a bewildered, stubborn struggle to control himself. He stammers after the Soldiers*).

Ha-ha-ha— Halt ! Halt, I say ! No use— they are gone—mutiny—Halt ! (*He continues to stumble toward left.*) Ha-ha— Stop it, curse you ! Am I laughing ? Where am I going ? After Lazarus ? Thirty years of discipline and I— Halt, traitor ! Remember Cæsar ! Remember Rome ! Halt, traitor ! (*He faints with the violence of his struggle and falls in a limp heap.*)

CALIGULA (*startled by his fall, terrified, hops to his feet and snatches up his sword defensively, glancing*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

over his shoulder and whirling around as if he expected someone to stab him in the back. Then, forcing a twisted grin of self-contempt—harshly). Coward ! What do I fear—if there is no death ? (As if he had to cut something, he snatches up a handful of flowers—desperately.) You must laugh, Caligula ! (He starts to lop off the flowers from their stems with a savage intentness.) Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh ! (Finally, impatiently, he cuts off all the remaining with one stroke.) Laugh ! (He grinds the petals under his feet and breaks out into a terrible hysterical giggle.) Ha-ha——

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *A midnight, months later. Immediately inside the walls of Rome. In the foreground is the portico of a temple between whose massive columns one looks across a street on a lower level to the high wall of Rome at the extreme rear. In the centre of the wall is a great metal gate. The night is thick and oppressive. In the sky overhead lightning flashes and thunder rumbles and crashes but there is no rain.*

Within the portico on rows of chairs placed on a series of wide steps which are on each side, members of the Senate are seated in their white robes. High hanging lamps cast a wan light over their faces. They are all masked in the Roman mask, refined in them by nobility of blood

LAZARUS LAUGHED

but at the same time with strength degenerated, corrupted by tyranny and debauchery to an exhausted cynicism. The three periods of Middle Age, Maturity and Old Age are represented in the types of the Self-Tortured, Introspective; Proud, Self-Reliant; the Servile, Hypocritical; the Cruel, Revengeful; and the Resigned, Sorrowful. The Senators are divided into two groups on each side, thirty in each. Seated in the middle of the lower of the three high broad stairs that lead to the level from which the columns rise is the Chorus of Senators, seven in number, facing front, in double-sized masks of the Servile, Hypocritical type of Old Age.

Lazarus, in his robe of white and gold, the aura of light surrounding his body seeming to glow more brightly than ever, stands in the rear at the edge of the portico, centre, gazing upward into the pall of sky beyond the wall. His figure appears in its immobility to be the statue of the god of the temple. Near him, but to the rear and to the left of him, facing right, Miriam is kneeling in her black robes, swaying backward and forward, praying silently with moving lips like a nun who asks for mercy for the sins of the world. She has grown much older, her hair is grey, her shoulders are bowed.

On the other side, placed similarly in relation to Lazarus and facing Miriam, Caligula is squatting on his hams on a sort of throne-chair of ivory and gold. He is dressed with foppish

LAZARUS LAUGHED

richness in extreme bright colours, a victory wreath around his head. He stares blinking and inquisitively at Lazarus, then at Miriam. He is half-drunk. A large figured goblet of gold is in his hand. A slave with an amphora of wine crouches on the steps by his chair. The slave wears a black negroid mask.

At the opening of the scene there is heard the steady tramp of departing troops, whose masks, helmets and armoured shoulders can be seen as they pass through the street before Lazarus to the gate beyond. Finally with a metallic clash the gate is shut behind them and there is a heavy and oppressive silence in which only the murmured prayers of Miriam are heard.

CHORUS OF THE SENATE (*intones wearily, as if under a boring compulsion*). The Roman Senate.

Is the Roman Senate
The Mighty Voice
Of the Roman People,
As long as Rome is Rome.

CALIGULA (*as if he hadn't heard—sings hoarsely an old camp song of the Punic Wars, pounding with his goblet*). A bold legionary am I !

March, oh march on !
A Roman eagle was my daddy,
My mother was a drunken drabby.
Oh, march on to the wars !

Since lived that lady Leda—
March, oh march on !
Women have loved high-fliers,

LAZARUS LAUGHED

And we are eagles of Rome !
Oh march on to the wars !
Comrades, march to the wars !
There's pretty girls in Carthage,
And wine to swill in Carthage,
So we must capture Carthage
And fight for Mother Rome !

(Holds out his goblet to be refilled. There is silence again. He stares at Lazarus with a sombre intentness. He says thickly.)

The legions have gone, Lazarus.

(Lazarus gives no evidence of having heard him. Caligula gulps at his wine. The Senators begin to talk to each other in low voices.)

FIRST SENATOR. How does that Jew make that light come from him, I wonder ? It is a well-contrived bit of magic.

SECOND SENATOR. What are we waiting for ? A messenger came to me with Cæsar's command that the Senate meet here at midnight.

THIRD SENATOR (*bored*). Some new whim of Tiberius, naturally—(*with a meaning titter*)—of rather I should say, unnaturally !

FOURTH SENATOR. Perhaps Cæsar has decided to abolish our august body by a massacre in mass !

THIRD SENATOR (*yawning*). There was a feast at Cinna's last night that lasted until this evening. I could welcome my own murder as an excuse for sleeping !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

FIFTH SENATOR (*pompously*). Tiberius would not dare harm the Senate. He may mistreat individual Senators, but the Roman Senate is the Roman Senate !

CHORUS OF THE SENATE (*as before—wearily as if under a boring compulsion—intones*). While Rome is Rome
The Senate is the Senate—
The Mighty Voice of the Roman People.

FIRST SENATOR (*with the ghost of a laugh—wearily*). The Senate is an empty name—a pack of degenerate cowards with no trace of their ancient nobility or courage remaining—that and no more !

THIRD SENATOR (*flippantly*). You are too severe with yourself, Lucius !

(*A titter of laughter.*)

FIRST SENATOR (*wearily*). A degenerate coward. I am, I confess it. So are you too, Sulpicius—a hundred fold !—whether you admit it or not.

(*Sulpicius laughs weakly, without taking offence.*)

SIXTH SENATOR (*after a pause—sighing*). In truth, the Senate is not what it used to be. I can remember—

FIRST SENATOR. Let us forget, if we can !
(*Then impatiently.*) What are we doing here ?

SECOND SENATOR. I imagine it has something to do with the followers of this Lazarus encamped outside the wall. Probably the legions are to butcher them in their sleep.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

SEVENTH SENATOR. And what part do we play—official witnesses? But how can we witness at night and through a wall? (*With bored resignation.*) Ah well, the moods of Tiberius are strange, to say the least. But Cæsar is Cæsar.

CHORUS (*again with bored weariness as before.*).
Hail !

Cæsar is Cæsar—
The August One,
Prince of the Senate,
Tribune over Tribunes,
Consul of Consuls,
Supreme Pontiff,
Emperor of Rome,
God among gods.
Hail !

FIRST SENATOR (*after a pause of silence—dryly.*).
Cæsar is a beast—and a madman !

FIFTH SENATOR (*pompously.*). Respect, sir !
More respect for Cæsar !

THIRD SENATOR (*mockingly.*). Or caution, Lucius. One of us might repeat your opinion to him.

FIRST SENATOR. You would if it would pay you. But all my money is squandered. My death is worthless to Tiberius. He would not reward you. Moreover, you would not be revenged on me, for I long for death.

THIRD SENATOR (*dryly.*). Your stomach must be out of order.

FIRST SENATOR. The times are out of order.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

But let us change the subject. Is it true Tiberius has fled to Capri ?

FOURTH SENATOR. Yes. He was terrified by the multitude of laughing idiots who appeared to-day with that charlatan. (*He points to Lazarus.*)

SECOND SENATOR. There are thousands of them outside the wall. Cæsar refused to let them enter the city. The story is, this Lazarus was dead four days and then restored himself to life by magic.

FIRST SENATOR. I have a mind to question him. (*Calls as to a slave.*) You, there ! Jew, turn round ! In the name of the Senate !

(*Lazarus seems not to hear him. Lucius remarks with a weary smile.*)

So much for our authority !

SIXTH SENATOR (*with injured dignity*). What insolence ! (*In a rage.*) Ho, barbarian cur, turn round ! The Senate commands you !

(*Lazarus does not seem to hear, but Caligula turns on them fiercely.*)

CALIGULA. Silence ! Leave him alone ! (*With insulting scorn.*) I, Caligula, command you !

(*The Senators seem to shrink back from him in fear, all but Lucius, who answers with a mocking servility.*)

FIRST SENATOR. At least, grant us the boon to see this corpse's face, O gracious Gaius !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*fixing his cruel, burning eyes on him—softly*). I heard you wish for death, Lucius. When I am Cæsar you shall scream and pray for it !

FIRST SENATOR (*dryly and haughtily*). You were bred in camp, Gaius. You should have learned more courage there along with your coarseness. But accept my gratitude for your warning. I shall take care to die before you become Cæsar—and life becomes too idiotic !

CALIGULA (*his grin becoming ferocious with cruelty*). No. You are too weak to kill yourself. Look at me, Lucius ! I am imagining what I shall have done to you !

(*The Senators are now trembling. Even Lucius cannot repress a shudder of horror at the face glaring at him. Suddenly Caligula throws the cup from him and springs to his feet.*)

What good is wine if it cannot kill thought ? Lazarus ! It is time. I must give the signal ! The legions are waiting. It is Cæsar's command that they spare none of your followers. (*He has walked toward Lazarus.*)

MIRIAM (*stretches out her hands to Caligula imploringly*). Mercy ! Spare them who are so full of life and joy !

CALIGULA (*harshly*). For their joy I will revenge myself upon them ! Mercy ? If there is no death, then death is a mercy ! Ask that man ! (*He points accusingly to Lazarus.*) And why should

LAZARUS LAUGHED

you plead for them, Jewess? There are few Jews among them. They are mostly those whom your people call idolators and would gladly see murdered.

MIRIAM (*with deep grief*). I am a mother of dead children. I plead for the mothers of those about to die.

CALIGULA (*contemptuously*). Pah! (*He turns from her and puts his hand on Lazarus' shoulder*.) Lazarus! Do you hear? I must signal to the legions!

LAZARUS (*turns. He has grown more youthful. He seems no more than thirty. His face is exalted and calm and beautiful. His eyes shine with an unearthly glory. The Senators lean forward in their seats, fascinated by his face. A low murmur of admiration comes from them. Lazarus speaks commanding*). Wait! I will awaken my beloved ones that their passing may be a symbol to the world that there is no death!

(*He turns, throwing back his head and stretching up his arms, and begins to laugh low and tenderly, like caressing music at first, but gradually gaining in volume, becoming more and more intense and insistent, finally ending up on a triumphant, blood-stirring call to that ultimate attainment in which all pre-possession with self is lost in an ecstatic affirmation of Life. The voices of his Followers from beyond the wall, at first one by one, then several at a time, then*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

multitudes, join in his laughter. Even the Senators are drawn into it. Now every one of these is standing up, stretching out his arms toward Lazarus, laughing harshly and discordantly and awkwardly in his attempt to laugh. Terrific flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder seem a responsive accompaniment from the heavens to this laughter of thousands which throbs in beating waves of sound in the air. Mingled with the laughing from beyond the wall comes the sound of singing and the music of flutes and cymbals. Miriam has crawled on her knees to the edge of the portico where her black figure of grief is outlined below and to the left of Lazarus, her arms raised outward like the arms of a cross.)

FOLLOWERS OF LAZARUS (*in a great chanting singing chorus).* Laugh ! Laugh !

There is only God !

Life is His Laughter !

We are His Laughter !

Fear is no more !

Death is dead !

CHORUS OF SENATORS (*taking it up in a tone between chanting and their old solemn intoning).*

Laugh ! Laugh !

Fear is no more !

Death is dead !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

ALL (*the multitude beyond the wall, all the Senators, every one except the never-laughing Miriam and Caligula and the Men of the Legions*). Laugh !
Laugh !

Death is dead !

CALIGULA (*in a queer state of mingled exaltation and fear—hopping restlessly about from foot to foot—shouting*). The signal ! Shall I give the signal to kill, Lazarus ?

MEN OF THE LEGIONS (*following a brazen trumpet call, are suddenly heard from beyond the wall beginning to laugh their hoarse, bass laughter, a deeper note than all the others*). Laugh ! Laugh !

CALIGULA (*listening—with dismay*). I hear the legions, Lazarus ! They are laughing with them ! (*He cries with a strange pitifulness and beseeching*.) You are playing me false, Lazarus ! You are trying to evade death ! You are trying to spare your people ! You are small and weak like other men when the test comes ! You give way to pity ! Your great laughter becomes pitiful ! (*Working himself into a rage*.) You are a traitor, Lazarus ! You betray Cæsar ! Have you forgotten I will be Cæsar ? You betray me, Lazarus ! (*He rushes to the edge and, making a megaphone of his hands, bellows*.) You on the wall ! Sentry ! It is I, Caligula ! Kill !

(*The brazen trumpets of the Legions sound from beyond the wall. He springs near Lazarus again, in a fiendish ecstasy*,

LAZARUS LAUGHED

*dancing a hopping grotesque sword dance
behind him, chanting as he does so.)*

Kill ! Kill laughter ! Kill those who deny Cæsar ! I will be Cæsar ! Kill those who deny Death ! I will be Death ! My face will be bright with blood ! My laughing face, Lazarus ! Laughing because men fear me ! My face of victorious Fear ! Look at me ! I am laughing, Lazarus ! My laughter ! Laughter of gods and Cæsars ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !

(He laughs, his laughter fanatically cruel and savage, forced from his lips with a desperate, destroying abandon. For a moment, above all the chorus of other sounds, his voice fights to overcome that of Lazarus, whose laughter seems now to have attained the most exultant heights of spiritual affirmation. Then Caligula's breaks into a cry of fear and a sob, and, casting his sword aside, he hides his face in his hands and cries beseechingly.)

Forgive me ! I love you, Lazarus ! Forgive me !

(At this second the blaring trumpets of the Legions are heard approaching and their great bass chorus of marching tramping laughter.)

MEN OF THE LEGIONS (*chanting*). Laugh !

Laugh ! Laugh !

Fear, no more !

Death, no more !

Death is dead !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*There is now no sound of the singing or the laughter or music of Lazarus' Followers. Miriam rocks to and fro and raises a low wail of lamentation. The Senators cheer and shout as at a triumph.*)

CHORUS OF SENATORS (*saluting Lazarus*). Hail,
Victor !

Hail, Divine One !
Thou hast slain fear !
Thou hast slain death !
Hail ! Triumph !

SENATORS. Hail ! Hail !
Slayer of Fear !
Slayer of Death !

(*The gate in the wall is clanged open. The returning Legions burst through and gather in a dense mob in the street below Lazarus, who looks down upon them, silent but smiling gently now. They stare at him with admiration. Only a sea of their masks can be seen, their eyes shining exultantly. Crassus, their general, ascends the steps until he stands a little below Lazarus. Their Chorus of Legionaries in double-sized masks climb to the step below Crassus, forming behind him. They are in the Period of Manhood, of the Simple, Ignorant Type. No weapons can be seen—only their masks and helmets and armour gleaming in the lightning flashes and in the flicker-*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

ing light of torches. Their laughter seems to shake the walls and make the pillars of the temple dance.)

CHORUS OF THE LEGIONS. Fear, no more !
Death, no more !
Death is dead !

LEGIONARIES (*echoing*). Laugh ! Laugh !
Laugh !
Death is dead !

CRASSUS (*raising his hand*). Silence ! (*They obey. He turns to Lazarus and bows his head, falling on one knee, raising his right arm.*) Hail !

LEGIONARIES (*as one man—raising their arms*). Hail !

CALIGULA (*suddenly pushes forward impudently and strikes a grandiose attitude*). I am here, my brave ones !

(*There is a roar of mocking laughter from the Legionaries.*)

CRASSUS (*not unkindly*). Not you, Little Killer ! We hail the Great Laugher !

CALIGULA (*harshly*). Have you killed all his followers ?

CRASSUS. No. They died. They did not wait for our attack. They charged upon us, laughing ! They tore our swords away from us, laughing, and we laughed with them ! They stabbed themselves, dancing as though it were a festival ! They died, laughing, in one another's

arms ! We laughed, too, with joy because it seemed it was not they who died but death itself they killed ! (*He stops uncertainly, bowing to Lazarus, awkwardly.*) I do not understand this. I am a soldier. But there is a god in it somewhere ! For I know they were drunk, and so were we, with a happiness no mortal ever felt on earth before ! And death was dead ! (*In a sudden outburst as if he were drunk with excitement, he takes off his helmet and waves it.*) Hail, Deliverer ! Death is dead ! We left our swords with them ! What virtue in killing when there is no death ? Your foe laughs. The joke is on you. What a fool's game, eh ? One can only laugh ! Now we want peace to laugh in—to laugh at war ! Let Cæsars fight—that is all they are good for—and not much good for that !

CALIGULA (*frenziedly*). Silence, impious traitor !

CRASSUS (*smiling drunkenly*). Shut up, yourself, camp-brat ! Though you were Cæsar this minute I would laugh at you ! Your death is dead ! We will make Lazarus Cæsar ! What say you ? (*He appeals to the Soldiers.*)

CALIGULA. No !

CHORUS OF THE LEGIONS (*with laughing intoxication*). Hail, Lazarus Cæsar ! Hail !

LEGIONARIES. Lazarus Cæsar, hail !

CRASSUS (*appealing to Senate*). And you, Senators !

CHORUS OF SENATORS (*with the same joyous in-*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

toxication as the Soldiers). Hail, Lazarus Cæsar !
Hail !

SENATORS. Lazarus Cæsar, hail !

CALIGULA (*piteously*). No, Lazarus ! Say no
for my sake !

LAZARUS (*with gay mockery*). What is—Cæsar ?

(*He begins to laugh with mockery. All except Caligula and Miriam join in this laughter.*)

CRASSUS. Ha-ha ! What is Cæsar ? You
are right ! You deserve better from us. A
god ? How is that ? We will build you a
temple, Lazarus, and make you a god !

LAZARUS (*laughingly*). When men make gods,
there is no God ! (*He laughs. They all laugh.*)

CRASSUS (*with puzzled good-nature*). I do not
understand. But there is a god in it somewhere
—a god of peace—a god of happiness ! Perhaps
you are already he, eh ? Are you ? Well, never
mind now, remember our offer. Give us your
answer to-morrow. Good night to you !

LAZARUS (*as the Soldiers start to march away
behind Crassus, and the Senators turn to retire, he
stops them all for a moment with a gesture—with a
deep earnestness*). Wait ! When you awake to-
morrow, try to remember ! Remember that
death is dead ! Remember to laugh !

ALL (*as if taking an oath with one voice*). We
will remember, Lazarus !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CRASSUS (*making a sign to the regimental musicians jovially*). And we will laugh ! Play there !

(*The bands crash out. The Legions tramp away.*)

CHORUS OF THE LEGIONS (*chanting to the music*).

Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !

Cæsar, no more !

War, no more !

Wounds, no more !

Death is dead !

Dead ! Dead ! Dead !

LEGIONARIES. Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !

Death is dead !

Dead ! Dead ! Dead !

CHORUS OF SENATORS (*following them*). Cæsar,
no more !

Fear, no more !

Death, no more !

Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !

SENATE (*elated, excited as a crowd of schoolboys going on a vacation. Marching after them*).

Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !

Death is dead !

(*Lazarus, Miriam and Caligula remain.*)

LAZARUS (*with a great yearning*). If men would remember ! If they could ! (*He stares after them compassionately.*)

CALIGULA (*crouching beside Lazarus. Plucks at his robe humbly*). You will not laugh at Cæsar,

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Lazarus, will you—when I am Cæsar ? You will not laugh at gods when they make me a god ?

(*Lazarus does not answer. Caligula forces a cruel vindictive smile.*)

I swear you shall not laugh at death when I am Death ! Ha-ha—— (*He starts to laugh harshly —then suddenly, terrified, slinks away and sidles off at right.*)

MIRIAM (*from where she kneels bowed with grief—brokenly*). Those who have just died were like your children, Lazarus. They believed in you and loved you.

LAZARUS. And I loved them !

MIRIAM. Then how could you laugh when they were dying ?

✓ LAZARUS (*exultingly*). Did they not laugh ? That was their victory and glory ! (*With more and more of a passionate, proud exultation.*) Eye to eye with the Fear of Death, did they not laugh with scorn ? “Death to old Death,” they laughed ! “Once as squirming specks we crept from the tides of the sea. Now we return to the sea ! Once as quivering flecks of rhythm we beat down from the sun. Now we re-enter the sun ! Cast aside is our pitiable pretence, our immortal ego-hood, the holy lantern behind which cringed our Fear of the Dark ! Flung off is that impudent insult to life’s nobility which gibbers : ‘I, this Jew, this Roman, this noble or this slave, must survive in my pettiness for ever !’ Away

LAZARUS LAUGHED

with such cowardice of spirit ! We will to die ! We will to change ! Laughing we lived with our gift, now with laughter give we back that gift to become again the Essence of the Giver ! Dying we laugh with the Infinite ! We are the Giver and the Gift ! Laughing, we will our own annihilation ! Laughing, we give our lives for Life's sake—! (*He laughs up to heaven ecstatically.*) This must Man will as his end and his new beginning ! He must conceive and desire his own passing as a mood of eternal laughter and cry with pride, "Take back, O God, and accept in turn a gift from me, my grateful blessing for Your gift—and see, O God, now I am laughing with You ! I am Your laughter—and You are mine !" (*He laughs again, his laughter dying lingeringly and tenderly on his lips like a strain of music receding into the silence over still waters.*)

MIRIAM (*with a sigh—meekly*). I cannot understand, Lazarus. (*Sadly.*) They were like your children—and they have died. Must you not mourn for them ?

LAZARUS (*gently*). Mourn ? When they laughed ?

MIRIAM (*sadly*). They are gone from us. And their mothers weep.

LAZARUS (*puts his arm around her and raises her to her feet—tenderly*). But God, their Father, laughs ! (*He kisses her on the forehead.*)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *Some days later—exterior of Tiberius' villa-palace at Capri. It is about two in the morning of a clear, black night. In the rear, the walls of the villa, which is built entirely of marble on the brow of a cliff, loom up with a startling clarity against the sky. The rear foreground is a marble terrace at the middle of which is a triumphal arch. On each side, leading up to it, are massive marble columns standing like the mummies of legionaries at attention. In the exact centre of the arch itself a cross is set up on which a full-grown male lion has been crucified. A lamp reflecting downward has been fixed at the top of the cross to light up an inscription placed over the lion's head. Below the steps to the terrace, in a line facing front, on each side of the cross, is the Chorus of the Guard in their double masks and gorgeous uniforms and armour. Their masks are the same as the Legionary Chorus of the previous scene.*

The windows of the palace glow crimson-purple with the reflection of many shaded lamps. The sound of music in a strained theme of that joyless abandon which is vice is heard above a confused drunken clamour of voices, punctuated by the high, staccato laughter of women and youths. A squad of the Guard in the same uniforms as the Chorus, masked as all the Roman

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Soldiers previously, enter from the left, front, climbing up from the beach below. They are commanded by a Centurion, Flavius. His mask is that of a typical young patrician officer. They are followed by Lazarus and Miriam. Caligula walks behind, his drawn sword in his hand. He is in a state of queer conflicting emotion, seeming to be filled with a nervous dread and terror of everything about him, while at the same time perversely excited and elated by his own morbid tension. Lazarus, looking no more than twenty-five, haloed in his own mystic light, walks in a deep, detached serenity.

Miriam, in black, her hair almost white now, her figure bowed and feeble, seems more than ever a figure of a sad, resigned mother of the dead. The soldiers form in line with the columns.

FLAVIUS (*saluting Caligula—with an awed glance at Lazarus*). I will announce your coming—(*as if in spite of himself he bows awkwardly to Lazarus*) —and that of this man. Cæsar was not expecting you so soon, I think.

CALIGULA (*forcing a light tone*). Lazarus laughed and the galley slaves forgot their fetters and made their oars fly as if they were bound for the Blessed Isles of Liberty ! (*Then with an ironic smile.*) But you need not tell Tiberius that, good Flavius. Say it was due to my extreme zeal.

FLAVIUS (*smiles with respectful understanding*.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Caligula nods in dismissal. Flavius turns to go—apologetically). You may have to wait. I dare not speak before he questions me.

(Flavius salutes and hastens to the villa, walking under an arm of the cross unconcernedly without an upward glance. As they follow him with their eyes Caligula and Miriam see the lion for the first time. He steps back with a startled exclamation. She gives a cry of horror and covers her eyes with her hands to shut out the sight.)

LAZARUS (*immediately puts his arms around her protectingly*). What is it, Beloved?

(She hides her face on his breast, pointing toward the lion with a trembling hand.)

CALIGULA (*pointing—curiously now, but with entire callousness*). This lion they have crucified. Are you frightened, Jewess? (*With a cruel laugh.*) My grandfather frequently plants whole orchards of such trees, but usually they bear human fruit!

MIRIAM (*with a shudder*). Monster!

CALIGULA (*with genuine surprise—turning to her*). Who? Why? (*He approaches the cross and stares at it moodily.*) But why did he have it placed here where he knew you must pass? Tiberius does not go to such pains to frighten women. (*His eyes fasten on the inscription above the lion's head.*) Aha! I see! (*He reads.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

"From the East, land of false gods and superstition, this lion was brought to Rome to amuse Cæsar." (*A silence. Caligula shrugs his shoulders, turning away—lightly.*) A lesson for you, Lazarus. An example for other lions—not to roar—or laugh—at Cæsar! (*He gives a harsh laugh.*) Tiberius must be terribly afraid of you. (*Then sombrely.*) You should never have come here. I would have advised you not to—but what are you to me? My duty, if I wish to become Cæsar, is to Cæsar. Besides, you are no fool. Evidently you must desire your own death. Last night *you* might have been Cæsar. The legions were yours.

LAZARUS (*smiling without bitterness—with a sad comprehension*). But this morning the legions had forgotten. They only remembered—to go out and pick up their swords! They also pillaged the bodies a little, as their right, believing now that they had slain them! (*This last a bit bitterly.*)

CALIGULA (*tauntingly*). The legions did slay them! It was only by some magician's trick you made them think your followers killed themselves.

LAZARUS (*not answering him—ironically to himself*). It is too soon. Men still need their swords to slash at ghosts in the dark. Men, those haunted heroes! (*He laughs softly.*)

CALIGULA (*irritably*). What are you laughing at?

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS. At Lazarus when I find him feeling wronged because men are men ! (*He laugh again, softly and musically.*)

CALIGULA (*again taunting brutally*). You may be in his place soon ! (*He points to the lion.*) Will you laugh then ?

(*Miriam gives a cry of terror.*)

LAZARUS (*calmly*). Yes. (*Then humbly, bowing his head.*) I will laugh with the pride of a beggar set upon the throne of Man !

CALIGULA (*sneeringly*). You boast. (*Then as Lazarus does not answer, touching the lion with intentional provoking brutality.*) This one from Africa seems almost gone. They do not last as long as men.

LAZARUS (*walks up the steps to the cross and, stretching to his full height, gently pushes the lion's hair out of its eyes—tenderly*). Poor brother ! Cæsar avenges himself on you because of me. Forgive me your suffering !

CALIGULA (*with a start backward—with frightened awe*). Gods ! He licks your hand ! I could swear he smiles—with his last breath ! (*Then with relief.*) Now he is dead !

LAZARUS (*gently*). There is no death.

CALIGULA (*pointing to the lion*). What is that then ?

LAZARUS. Your fear of life.

CALIGULA (*impatiently*). Bah ! (*Then sombrely.*)

A little fear is useful even for lions—or teachers of laughter if they wish to laugh long ! (*Then with a sudden exasperation.*) Escape now, you fool, while there is still time !

LAZARUS (*laughing softly*). Escape—what ?

CALIGULA (*in a frenzy*). You know, you ass, you lunatic ! Escape death ! Death ! Death ! (*To Miriam.*) You, woman ! Talk to him ! Do you want him nailed up like that ?

MIRIAM (*with a pitiful cry*). Lazarus ! Come ! Caligula will help us !

CALIGULA (*harshly*). You presume, Jewess ! I have no wish to die ! (*Then with his wry smile.*) But I will turn my back—and shut my eyes——(*He walks away to left.*)

MIRIAM (*beseechingly*). Lazarus ! I could no bear that aching hunger of my empty heart if you should die again !

LAZARUS (*coming to her—tenderly*). I will not leave you ! Believe in me ! (*He kisses her forehead tenderly.*)

MIRIAM (*after a pause—slowly and lamentingly*). I wish we were home, Lazarus. This Roman world is full of evil. These skies threaten. These hearts are heavy with hatred. There is a taint of blood in the air that poisons the breath of the sea. These columns and arches and thick walls seem waiting to fall, to crush these rotten men and then to crumble over the bones that raised them until both are dust. It is a world

LAZARUS LAUGHED

deadly to your joy, Lazarus. Its pleasure is a gorging of dirt, its fulfilled desire a snoring in a sty in the mud among swine. Its will is so sick that it must kill in order to be aware of life at all. I wish we were home, Lazarus. I begin to feel horror gnawing at my breast. I begin to know the torture of the fear of death, Lazarus—not of my death but of yours—not of the passing of your man's body but of the going away from me of your laughter which is to me as my son, my little boy !

LAZARUS (*soothing her*). Be comforted, Beloved. Your fear shall never be !

MIRIAM. On the hills near Bethany you might pray at noon and laugh your boy's laughter in the sun and there would be echoing laughter from the sky and up from the grass and distantly from the shining sea. We would adopt children whose parents the Romans had butchered, and their laughter would be around me in my home where I cooked and weaved and sang. And in the dawn at your going out, and in the evening on your return, I would hear in the hushed air the bleating of sheep and the tinkling of many little bells and your voice. And my heart would know peace.

LAZARUS (*tenderly*). Only a little longer ! There is God's laughter on the hills of space, and the happiness of children, and the soft healing of innumerable dawns and evenings, and the blessing of peace !

CALIGULA (*looks around at Lazarus impatiently. Then he makes a beckoning gesture to Miriam*). Ssstt !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(Wonderingly she leaves Lazarus' side and follows him. Lazarus remains, his eyes fixed on the cross, directly in front of it. Caligula speaks gruffly to Miriam with a sneer.)

Jewess, your Lazarus is mad, I begin to think.
(Then confusedly but helplessly inquisitive and confiding—bursting out.) What is it troubles me about him? What makes me dream of him? Why should I—love him, Jewess? Tell me! You love him, too. I do not understand this. Why, wherever he goes, is there joy? You heard even the galley slaves laugh and clank time with their chains! (Then with exasperation.) And yet why can I not laugh, Jewess?

*MIRIAM (in a tone of hushed grief). I may not laugh either. My heart remains a little dead with Lazarus in Bethany. The miracle could not revive all his old husband's life in my wife's heart.

CALIGULA (disgustedly). What answer is that to me? (Then brusquely.) But I called you to put you on your guard. (He points.) There is death in there—Tiberius' death, a kind from which no miracles can recall one! (He smiles his twisted smile.) Since Lazarus will not help himself, you must protect him. I will not, for once in there I am (mockingly) the heir of Cæsar, and you are scum whom I will kill at his order as I would two beetles! So keep watch! Taste first of what he eats—even were I the one to give it to him!

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS (*suddenly laughs softly*). Why do you delight in believing evil of yourself, Caligula ?

CALIGULA (*flying into a queer rage*). You lie ! I am what I am ! (*With grandiose pride.*) What could you know of a Cæsar ?

LAZARUS (*still laughing with an affectionate understanding.*) What—I know !

(*As he finishes speaking all the sound of music and voices from the house ceases abruptly and there is a heavy silence.*)

MIRIAM (*shaking her head and turning away sadly*). This is too far, Lazarus. Let us go home.

CALIGULA (*harshly*). Sst ! Do you hear ? Flavius has told Cæsar. (*Grimly forcing a harsh snicker.*) Now we will soon know—

(*There is the sudden blaring of a trumpet from within the palace. A wide door is flung open and a stream of reddish light comes out against which the black figures of several men are outlined. The door is shut again quickly. Several Slaves bearing lamps on poles escort the patrician, Marcellus, forward to the arch. He passes under the crucified lion without a glance—then stands, cool and disdainful, to look about him. He is a man of about thirty-five, wearing the type mask of a Roman patrician to which are added the dissipated courtier's*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

characteristics of one who leans to evil more through weakness than any instinctive urge. He is dressed richly. His smile is hypocritical and his eyes are hard and cold, but when they come to rest on Lazarus he gives a start of genuine astonishment.)

CALIGULA (*who has moved to Lazarus' side defensively—in a quick whisper*). Beware of this man, Lazarus ! (*Then advancing—with a condescending hauteur.*) Greeting, Marcellus !

MARCELLUS (*in an ingratiating tone*). Greeting, Gaius. I have a message from Cæsar for the man called Lazarus.

LAZARUS (*calmly*). I am Lazarus.

MARCELLUS (*makes a deep bow—flatteringly*). I had surmised it, sir. Although I cannot pretend to virtue in myself at least I may claim the merit of recognizing it in others. (*He advances toward Lazarus, smiling, with one hand kept hidden beneath his cloak.*)

CALIGULA (*stepping between them—sharply*). What is your message ?

MARCELLUS (*surprised—placatingly*). I am sorry, Gaius, but it was Cæsar's command I speak to Lazarus alone.

CALIGULA (*fiercely*). And then, Marcellus ?

(*Marcellus shrugs his shoulders and smiles deprecatingly.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS (*with a compelling dignity*). Let him speak. (*Inclining his head to Marcellus—strangely.*) Over here where it is dark you will not be seen—nor see yourself. (*He walks to the darkness at right.*)

CALIGULA (*turning his back on them, with angry boyish resentfulness that is close to tears*). Idiot ! Go and die, then !

MIRIAM (*with a terrified cry*). Lazarus ! (*She starts to go to him.*)

LAZARUS (*motioning her to remain where she is—gently*). Believe, Beloved ! (*He turns his back on them all and stands waiting.*)

MARCELLUS (*stares at Lazarus—then over his shoulder at Caligula—uncertainly*). What does he mean, Gaius ? (*Then suddenly putting on a brave front, he strides up behind Lazarus.*) Cæsar wished me to bid you welcome, to tell you how much regard he has for you, but he desired me to ask whether you propose to laugh here—in Cæsar's palace ? He has heard that you laugh at death—that you have caused others to laugh—even his legionaries. (*A pause, Marcellus remains behind Lazarus' back, the latter standing like a victim.*) Briefly, Cæsar requires your pledge that you will not laugh. Will you give it ? (*He frees his dagger from under his robe. A pause. Arrogantly.*) I am waiting ! Answer when Cæsar commands ! (*Then angrily, baffled.*) I will give you while I count three—or take your silence as a refusal ! One ! Two ! Three !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(He raises his hand to stab Lazarus in the back. Miriam stifles a scream. At the same instant, Lazarus begins to laugh, softly and affectionately. Marcellus stops, frozen in mid-action, the dagger upraised. Caligula has whirled around and stands staring, a smile gradually coming to his face. Lazarus turns, his laughter grown a trifle louder, and faces Marcellus. The latter steps back from him, staring open-mouthed, fascinated. His arm sinks to his side. The dagger falls from his fingers. He smiles back at Lazarus—the curious, sheepish, bashful smile of one who has fallen in love and been discovered.)

LAZARUS (going to him, puts both hands on his shoulders and looks in his eyes, laughing affectionately—then quizzically.) Here is another one who believes in death ! But soon you will laugh with life ! I see it in your eyes. Farewell, Marcellus !

(He turns away from him and walks, laughing, toward the arch in rear. With bowed head the black-robed figure of Miriam follows him. Marcellus hides his face in his hands, half-sobbing, and half-laughing hysterically. Lazarus pauses before the cross for a moment—raises his hand as if blessing the dead lion, then passes below it, moving

LAZARUS LAUGHED

*slowly on toward the palace in the rear.
His laughter rises with more and more
summoning power. The files of the
Guard, as he passes them, two by two
join in his laughter, saluting him as if
in spite of themselves.)*

CALIGULA (*sidling up to Marcellus, cruel and mocking*). Are you weeping, Marcellus ? Laugh at that blundering fool, yourself ! What will Cæsar say ? Will he laugh when he has your body broken one bone at a time with hammers ? Why did you not kill ? For shame ! A patrician exposed to laughter by a Jew ! Poor craven ! Why could you not strike ? There *must* be death ! Coward ! Why did you not stab ? (*Then in a queer awed whisper.*) I know ! Was it not because of a sudden you loved him and could not ?

MARCELLUS (*suddenly—eagerly*). Yes ! That was it ! I loved him !

CALIGULA (*craftily and cruelly*). You were about to murder him !

MARCELLUS (*tortured with remorse*). No ! No ! How could I ? What infamy ! (*Cries tearfully.*) Forgive me, Lazarus !

CALIGULA (*with vindictive insistence*). Judge yourself ! (*He takes up the dagger.*) Here is your dagger ! Avenge him on yourself !

MARCELLUS (*trying to laugh*). Ha-ha— Yes ! (*He stabs himself and falls.* Suddenly his laughter

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(is released.) I laugh ! You are a fool, Caligula ! There is no death ! (He dies, laughing up at the sky.)

CALIGULA (*kicks his body with savage cruelty.*) You lie ! (*Then suddenly kneels and bends over it imploringly.*) Tell me you lie, Marcellus ! Do me that mercy !—and when I am Cæsar, I—

(*He begins to weep like a frightened boy, his head in his hands. Meanwhile Lazarus has arrived with Miriam at the steps before the door of the palace. As he starts to ascend these, the crimson-purple lights of the many windows of the palace go out one by one as if fleeing in terror from the laughter which now beats at the walls.*)

CHORUS OF THE GUARD. Fear, no more !
Death, no more !
Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !
Death is dead !

ALL THE GUARDS (*now all in a great chorus, raising their spears aloft and saluting Lazarus as if they were his own triumphal bodyguard.*).
Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !
Death is dead !

(*Lazarus has ascended the steps. He walks into the black archway of the darkened palace, his figure radiant and unearthly in his own light. Miriam follows him. They disappear in the darkness. There is a pause of dead silence.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*raises his head uneasily, looks back toward the palace, jumps to his feet in a panic of terror, and runs toward the palace door, calling*). Lazarus ! Wait ! I will defend you ! There is death inside there—death ! Beware, Lazarus !

CHORUS OF THE GUARD (*as the laughter of Lazarus is heard again from the dark palace*).

Laugh ! Laugh ! Laugh !

Death is dead !

ALL THE GUARDS. Dead ! Dead ! Dead !
Death is dead !

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *The banquet hall in the palace of Tiberius—an immense high-ceilinged room. In the rear, centre, is a great arched doorway. Smaller arches in the middle of the side walls lead into other rooms. Long couches are placed along the walls at right and left, and along the rear wall on either side of the arch. Before these couches, a series of narrow tables is set. In the centre of the room on a high dais is the ivory and gold chair of Cæsar, a table in front of it, couches for him to recline on at either side. On this table, and on all the tables for his guests, gold lamps with shades of crimson-purple are placed.*

Reclining on the couches on the right are

LAZARUS LAUGHED

young women and girls, on the left, youths of an equal number.

The masks are based on the Roman masks of the periods of Boyhood (or Girlhood), Youth, and Young Manhood (or Womanhood), and there are seven individuals of each period and sex in each of the three types of the Introspective, Self-Tortured ; the Servile, Hypocritical ; and the Cruel, Revengeful—a crowd of forty-two in all. There is a distinctive character to the masks of each sex, the stamp of an effeminate corruption on all the male, while the female have a bold, masculine expression. The male masks are a blotched heliotrope in shade. These youths wear female wigs of curled wire like frizzed hair of a yellow gold. They are dressed in women's robes of pale heliotrope, they wear anklets and bracelets and necklaces. The women are dressed as males in crimson or deep purple. They also wear wire wigs but of straight hair cut in short boyish mode, dyed either deep purple or crimson. Those with crimson hair are dressed in purple, and vice versa. The female voices are harsh, strident, mannish—those of the youths affected, lisping, effeminate. The whole effect of these two groups is of sex corrupted and warped, of invented lusts and artificial vices.

The Chorus in this scene and the next is composed of three males and four females—the males in the period of Youth, one in each of the types represented, and three of the females in similar

LAZARUS LAUGHED

type-period masks. The fourth female is masked in the period of Womanhood in the Proud, Self-Reliant type. They sit, facing front in their double-sized masks, on the side steps of the dais, four on right, three on left.

Pompeia, a Roman noblewoman, the favourite mistress of Cæsar, sits at front, right.

She wears a half-mask on the upper part of her face, olive-coloured with the red of blood smouldering through, with great, dark, cruel eyes—a dissipated mask of intense evil beauty, of lust and perverted passion. Beneath the mask, her own complexion is pale, her gentle, girlish mouth is set in an expression of agonized self-loathing and weariness of spirit. Her body is strong and beautiful. Her wig and dress are purple.

Tiberius Cæsar stands on the dais, dressed in deep purple, fringed and ornamented with crimson and gold. An old man of seventy-six, tall, broad and corpulent but of great muscular strength still despite his age, his shiny white cranium rises like a polished shell above his half-masked face. This mask is a pallid purple blotched with darker colour, as if the imperial blood in his veins had been sickened by age and debauchery. The eyes are protuberant, leering, cynical slits, the long nose, once finely modelled, now gross and thickened, the forehead lowering and grim. Beneath the mask, his own mouth looks as incongruous as Caligula's. The lips are thin and stern and self-contained—the lips

LAZARUS LAUGHED

of an able soldier-statesman of rigid probity. His chin is forceful and severe. The complexion of his own skin is that of a healthy old campaigner.

As the curtain rises, slaves are hurriedly putting out the many lamps. From outside, the laughter of Lazarus rises on the deep ground swell of the Guard's laughter. The walls and massive columns seem to reverberate with the sound. In the banquet-room all are listening fascinatedly. Every reaction, from the extreme of panic fear or hypnotized ecstasy to a feigned cynical amusement or a pretended supercilious indifference, is represented in their frozen attitudes. Tiberius stands, shrinking back, staring at the doorway in the rear with superstitious dread. A squad of the Guard surround the dais, commanded by Flavius.

TIBERIUS (*in a strained voice shaken by apprehension and awe*). Marcellus ! Strike him down ! Stab him !

SOLDIERS OF THE GUARD (*from without*). Laugh !
Laugh ! Laugh !
Death is dead !

TIBERIUS (*as he suddenly sees the shining figure of Lazarus appear at the end of the dark hall beyond the archway*). Gods ! Flavius, look ! (He points with a shaking finger. Flavius has leaped up to his side.)

FLAVIUS (*not without dread himself*). That is the man, Cæsar.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

TIBERIUS. Man? Say a *dæmon*! (*To the slaves who are turning out the few remaining lamps.*) Quick! Darkness! (*He puts out the lamp on his table himself. Then as nothing is seen but the light from the approaching Lazarus.*) Flavius! Stand here in my place! It will think you are Cæsar! (*He clumps heavily down the steps of the dais.*) Guards! Here! Cover me with your shields!

(*He goes to the extreme right corner, front, and crouches there. His Guards follow him. They hold their shields so that they form a wall around him and half over him. Then Caligula's voice is heard screaming above the chorus of laughter as he enters the hall behind Lazarus.*)

CALIGULA. Beware of death! I will defend you, Lazarus! (*He is seen to rush past Lazarus, flourishing his sword and comes running into the room, shouting.*) Cæsar! Dare not to murder Lazarus! (*He leaps to the dais and up its steps in a frenzy.*) Dare not, I say! (*He stabs Flavius with a savage cry.*) Ah! (*Then as the body of Flavius falls heavily and rolls down the steps at right, he begins to laugh, at first a clear laughter of selfless joy, sounding startlingly incongruous from him.*) I have saved you, Lazarus—at the risk of my own life—and now, hear me, I can laugh!

(*Lazarus appears in the archway, Miriam behind him. He stops laughing and*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

immediately there is silence, except for Caligula. Lazarus casts a luminous glow over the whole room in which the masked faces appear distorted and livid. Caligula stands with upraised sword by the chair of Cæsar. Suddenly his laughter cracks, changes, becomes full of his old fear and blood-lust.)

CALIGULA. Ha-ha-ha ! See, Lazarus ! (*He points to the body of Flavius with his sword.*) Welcome in the name of Cæsar, now Cæsar is slain and I am Cæsar !

(*He assumes the absurd grandiose posture of his imperial posing. No one looks at him or hears him. Their eyes are on Lazarus as he moves directly to where Tiberius crouches behind the shields of the Guards. Miriam follows him. Caligula turns and stares toward him, and then down at the body of Flavius and back, in a petrified, bewildered stupor. Lazarus steps up beside Tiberius. The Guards make way for him fearfully.*)

TIBERIUS (*feeling his nearness—straightening himself with a certain dignity*). Strike ! I have been a soldier. Thou canst not make me fear death, Dæmon ! (*He draws his toga over his face.*)

LAZARUS (*smiling gently*). Then fear not fear, Tiberius !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*He reaches out and pulls back the toga from his face. Tiberius looks into his eyes, at first shrinkingly, then with growing reassurance, his own masked face clearly revealed now in the light from Lazarus.*)

TIBERIUS (*at first falteringly*). So—thou art not evil? Thou art not come to contrive my murder? (*As Lazarus smilingly shakes his head, Tiberius frowns.*) Then why dost thou laugh against Cæsar? (*Then bitterly—with a twisted attempt at a smile.*) Yet I like thy laughter. It is young. Once I laughed somewhat like that—so I pardon thee. I will even laugh at thee in return. Ha-ha! (*His laughter is cold, cruel and merciless as the grin of a skeleton.*)

CALIGULA (*who has been staring in a bewildered stupor from Tiberius, whom he thought he had killed, to the body of Flavius—quaking with terror now as if this laugh was meant for him, drops to his knees, his sword clattering down the steps to the floor.*) Mercy, Tiberius! I implore you forgive your Caligula!

TIBERIUS (*not understanding. Fixing his eyes on Caligula with a malevolent irony*). Come down from my throne, Caligula. (*Caligula slinks down warily.*) You are too impatient. But I must pardon you, too—for where could I find another heir so perfect for serving my spite upon mankind? (*He has walked toward the throne while he is speaking, Caligula backing away from him.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Lazarus remains where he is, Miriam beside and to the rear of him. Tiberius, his eyes fixed on Caligula, stumbles against the body of Flavius. He gives a startled gasp and shrinks back, calling.) Lights ! A light here ! (A crowd of masked slaves obey his orders. One runs to him with a lantern. He looks down at Flavius' corpse—half to himself.) I did wisely to stand him in my place. (To Caligula—with sinister emphasis.) Too impatient, my loving grandchild ! Take care lest I become impatient also—with your impatience !

(Caligula shudders and backs away to the extreme left corner, front, where he crouches on his haunches as inconspicuously as possible. Tiberius suddenly whirls around as if he felt a dagger at his back.)

TIBERIUS. Where—? (*Seeing Lazarus where he had been—with relief—staring at his face now that the room is flooded with the purplish-crimson glow from all the lamps.*) Ah, you are there. More lights ! Darkness leads men into error. My heir mistakes a man for Cæsar, and Cæsar, it appears, has mistaken a man for a dæmon ! (*Scrutinizing him—with sinister finality.*) I can deal with men. I know them well. Too well ! (*He laughs grimly.*) Therefore I hate them. (*He mounts the steps of the dais and sits on the couch at left of table—staring at Lazarus, wonderingly.*) But you seem—something other than man ! That light ! (*Then he forces a harsh laugh.*) A

LAZARUS LAUGHED

trick ! I had forgotten you are a magician. (*Arrogantly.*) Stand there, Jew. I would question you about your magic. (*Smilingly Lazarus ascends to where Tiberius points at the top of the dais. Miriam remains standing at the foot. Tiberius stares for a while with sombre intensity at Lazarus.*) They say you died and have returned from death ?

LAZARUS (*smiling—as if he were correcting a child.*) There is no death, Cæsar.

TIBERIUS (*with a sneer of scepticism but with an underlying eagerness.*) I have heard you teach that folly. (*Then threateningly.*) You shall be given full opportunity to prove it ! (*A pause—then in a low voice, bending down toward Lazarus.*) Do you foretell the future ? (*Trembling but with a pretence of carelessness.*) Must I die soon ?

LAZARUS (*simply*). Yes, Cæsar.

✓ TIBERIUS (*jumping up with a shuddering start.*) Soon ? Soon ? (*Then his fear turning to rage.*) What do you say ? Vile Jew, do you dare threaten me with death ! (*Lazarus, looking into his eyes, begins to laugh softly. Tiberius sinks back on his couch, fighting to control himself—confusedly.*) Laugh not, I ask you. I am old. It is not seemly. (*Lazarus ceases his low laughter. A pause. Tiberius broods—then suddenly.*) And you were really dead ? (*He shudders.*) Come nearer. I need to watch your face. I have learned to read the lies in faces. A Cæsar gets much practice—from childhood on—too much !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*With awe.*) Your eyes are dark with death. While I watch them, answer me, what cured thee of death?

LAZARUS (*gently*). There is only life, Cæsar. (*Then gaily mocking but compellingly.*) And laughter! Look! Look well into my eyes, old Reader of Lies, and see if you can find aught in them that is not life—and laughter!

(*He laughs softly. A ripple of soft laughter from the motionless figures about the room echoes his.* Tiberius stares into his eyes. *In the silence that ensues Pompeia gets up and walks over to the dais.* She stops to stare for a moment with cruel contempt at Miriam, then stands and looks up at Lazarus, trying in vain to attract his or Cæsar's attention. *Failing in this, she passes over and sits beside Caligula, whose attention is concentrated on Lazarus.*)

POMPEIA. I admire your strange magician, Caligula.

CALIGULA (*without looking at her*). He is no magician. He is something like a god.

POMPEIA (*longingly*). His laughter is like a god's. He is strong. I love him.

CALIGULA (*turning to her—coarsely*). Do not waste your lust. He is faithful to his wife, I warn you.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

POMPEIA (*she points to Miriam*). Not that ugly slave ?

CALIGULA. Yes. And yet, on our journey, whole herds of women—and many as beautiful as you, Pompeia—threw themselves on him and begged for his love.

POMPEIA (*her voice hardening*). And he ?

CALIGULA. He laughed—and passed on. (*She starts. Caligula goes on wonderingly.*) But they seemed as happy as if his laughter had possessed them ! You are a woman. Tell me, how could that be ?

POMPEIA (*her voice cruel*). He shall not laugh at me !

CALIGULA (*tauntingly*). I will bet a string of pearls against your body for a night that he does.

POMPEIA (*defiantly*). Done ! (*Then she laughs—a low, cruel laugh—staring at Miriam.*) So he loves that woman ?

CALIGULA (*curiously*). What are you planning ?

POMPEIA. I shall offer her the fruit Cæsar preserves for those he fears.

CALIGULA (*with a careless shrug*). You will not win his love by killing her.

POMPEIA. I no longer want his love. I want to see him suffer, to hear his laughter choke in his throat with pain ! (*She speaks with more and more voluptuous satisfaction.*) Then I shall laugh ! (*She laughs softly and steps forward.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*concernedly*). Stop. I am his protector. (*Then suddenly.*) But what is the Jewess to me? (*With more and more of a spirit of perverse cruelty.*) Do it, Pompeia! His laughter is too cruel to us! We must save death from him!

POMPEIA (*walks to the dais which she ascends slowly until she stands by Cæsar's couch behind him, confronting Lazarus.* But the two men remain unmindful of her presence. *Tiberius continues to stare into Lazarus' eyes. His whole body is now relaxed, at rest, a dreamy smile softens his thin, compressed mouth.* Pompeia leans over and takes a peach from the bowl of fruit on Cæsar's table and, taking Tiberius' hand in her other, she kisses it and calls insistently). Cæsar. It is I, Pompeia.

(*Lazarus does not look at her. She stares at him defiantly. Tiberius blinks his eyes in a daze.*)

TIBERIUS (*dreamily*). Yes! A cloud came from a depth of sky—around me, softly, warmly, and the cloud dissolved into the sky, and the sky into peace! (*Suddenly springing to his feet and staring about him in a confused rage—clutching Pompeia by the shoulder and forcing her to her knees.*) What are you doing here?

POMPEIA. Forgive your loving slave! I grew afraid this magician had put you under a spell. (*She stares at Lazarus, her words challenging him.*)

TIBERIUS (*confusedly, sinking back on his couch and releasing her.*) A spell? Could it be he laid

LAZARUS LAUGHED

a dream of death upon me, leading me to death ?
(*He trembles timorously—appealing to Lazarus.*)
Whatever magic thou didst to me, Dæmon, I
beseech thee undo it !

LAZARUS (*smiling*). Do you fear peace ?

POMPEIA (*harshly and insolently*). Mock not at Cæsar, dog ! (*Lazarus continues to smile. His eyes remain on Cæsar. He seems absolutely unaware of Pompeia. This enrages her the more against him. She speaks tauntingly to Tiberius.*) Surely, Cæsar, this magician must have powerful charms, since he dares to mock Tiberius to his face !

TIBERIUS (*stung*). Be still ! (*Then in a low tone to her.*) Do you not know this Lazarus died and then by his magic rose from his tomb.

POMPEIA (*scornfully*). To believe that, I must have seen it, Cæsar !

TIBERIUS (*impatiently*). Do you think I would believe without good evidence ? I have had them take the statements of many witnesses. The miracle was done in conjunction with another Jew acting as this man's tool. This other Jew, the report states, could not possibly have possessed any magic power Himself, for Pilate crucified Him a short time after and He died in pain and weakness within a few hours. But this Lazarus laughs at death !

LAZARUS (*looks up, smiling with ironical bitterness*). Couldst Thou but hear, Jesus ! And

LAZARUS LAUGHED

men shall keep on in panic nailing Man's soul to
the cross of their fear until in the end they do it
to avenge Thee, for Thine Honour and Glory !
*(He sighs sadly—then after a struggle overcoming
himself—with exultance.)* Yes ! *(His eyes fall
again to Tiberius and he smiles.)* Yes ! Yes to
the stupid as to the wise ! To what is understood
and to what cannot be understood ! Known and
unknown ! Over and over ! For ever and
ever ! Yes ! *(He laughs softly to himself.)*

TIBERIUS (*with superstitious dread*). What dost
thou mean, Dæmon ?

POMPEIA (*with indignant scorn*). Let him prove
there is no death, Cæsar ! *(She appeals to the
company, who straighten up on their couches with
interest.)*

CHORUS (*chant demandingly*). Let him prove
there is no death !
We are bored !

CROWD (*echoing*). Prove there is no death !
We are bored, Cæsar !

TIBERIUS (*waits to see what Lazarus will say—
then as he says nothing, plucking up his courage—his
cruelty aroused*). Do you hear, Lazarus ?

POMPEIA. Make him perform his miracle
again !

CHORUS (*as before*). Let him perform a
miracle !
We are bored, Cæsar !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CROWD (*they now stand up and coming from behind their tables, move forward toward the dais*). A miracle !

We are bored !

POMPEIA. Let him raise someone from the dead !

CHORUS (*chanting with a pettish insistence*).
Raise the dead !

We are bored !

CROWD (*echoing—grouping in a big semicircle as of spectators in a theatre, around and to the sides of the dais, one sex on each side. Caligula moves in from the left in front of them. They form in three ranks, the first squatting on their hams like savages (as Caligula does), the second rank crouching over them, the third leaning over the second, all with a hectic, morbid interest*). We are bored !

Raise the dead !

POMPEIA (*with a cruel smile*). I have thought of a special test for him, Cæsar. (*She whispers in Cæsar's ear and points to Miriam and the fruit in her hand*.) And he must laugh !

TIBERIUS (*with a harsh, cruel chuckle*). Yes, I shall command him to laugh ! (*Then disgustedly*.) But she is sad and old. I will be only doing him a favour.

CALIGULA (*rocking back and forth on his haunches—looking at Lazarus with taunting cruelty*). No, Cæsar ! I know he loves her !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

LAZARUS. Yes ! (*He steps down from the dais to Miriam's side and taking her head in both his hands, he kisses her on the lips.*)

TIBERIUS (*with a malignant grin*). Give her the fruit !

POMPEIA (*advances and offers the peach to Miriam —with a hard, cruel little laugh*). Cæsar invites you to eat !

MIRIAM (*to Lazarus—requesting meekly but longingly*). May I accept, Lazarus ? Is it time at last ? My love has followed you over long roads among strangers and each league we came from home my heart has grown older. Now it is too old for you, a heart too weary for your loving laughter. Ever your laughter has grown younger, Lazarus ! Upward it springs like a lark from a field, and sings ! Once I knew your laughter was my child, my son of Lazarus ; but then it grew younger and I felt at last it had returned to my womb—and ever younger and younger—until, to-night, when I spoke to you of home, I felt new birth-pains as your laughter, grown too young for me, flew back to the unborn—a birth so like a death ! (*She sobs and wipes her eyes with her sleeve—then humbly, reaching out for the fruit*.) May I accept it, Lazarus ? You should have new-born laughing hearts to love you. My old one labours with memories and its blood is sluggish with the past. Your home on the hills of space is too far away. My heart longs for the warmth of close walls of earth baked in the sun.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Our home in Bethany, Lazarus, where you and my children lived and died. Our tomb near our home, Lazarus, in which you and my children wait for me. Is it time at last?

LAZARUS (*deeply moved*). Poor lonely heart! It has been crueler for you than I remembered. Go in peace—to peace! (*His voice trembles in spite of himself.*) I shall be lonely, dear one. (*With a note of pleading.*) You have never laughed with my laughter. Will you call back—Yes!—when you know—to tell me you understand and laugh with me at last?

MIRIAM (*not answering him, to Pompeia, taking the peach and making a humble courtesy before her.*) I thank you, pretty lady.

(*She raises the peach toward her mouth. Involuntarily one of Lazarus' hands half-reaches out as if to stop her.*)

POMPEIA (*with savage triumph, pointing*). See! He would stop her! He is afraid of death!

CHORUS (*pointing—jeeringly*). He is afraid of death! Ha-ha-ha-ha!

CROWD (*jeeringly*). Ha-ha-ha-ha!

MIRIAM (*bites into the peach and, chewing, begins, as if immediately affected, to talk like a garrulous old woman, her words coming quicker and quicker as her voice becomes fainter and fainter.*) Say what you like, it is much better I should go home first, Lazarus. We have been away so long, there will

LAZARUS LAUGHED

be so much to attend to about the house. And all the children will be waiting. You would be as helpless as a child, Lazarus. Between you and the children, things would soon be in a fine state ! (*More and more confused.*) No, no ! You cannot help me, dearest one. You are only in my way. No, I will make the fire. When you laid it the last time, we all had to run for our lives, choking, the smoke poured from the windows, the neighbours thought the house was burning ! (*She laughs—a queer, vague little inward laugh.*) You are so impractical. The neighbours all get the best of you. Money slips through your fingers. If it was not for me— (*She sighs—then brightly and lovingly.*) But, dearest husband, why do you take it so to heart ? Why do you feel guilty because you are not like other men ? That is why I love you so much. Is it a sin to be born a dreamer ? But God, He must be a dreamer, too, or how would we be on earth ? Do not keep saying to yourself so bitterly, you are a failure in life ! Do not sit brooding on the hilltop in the evening like a black figure of Job against the sky ! (*Her voice trembling.*) Even if God has taken our little ones—yes, in spite of sorrow—have you not a good home I make for you, and a wife who loves you ? (*She forces a chuckle.*) Be grateful, then—for me ! Smile, my sad one ! Laugh a little once in a while ! Come home, bringing me laughter of the wind from the hills ! (*Swaying, looking at the peach in her hand.*) What a mellow, sweet fruit ! Did you bring it home for me ?

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(She falls back into his arms. Gently he lets her body sink until it rests against the steps of the dais. Tiberius rises from his couch to bend over with cruel gloating. Pompeia steps nearer to Lazarus, staring at him mockingly. Caligula hops to her side, looking from Lazarus to Miriam. The half-circle of masked figures moves closer, straining forward and downward as if to overwhelm the two figures at the foot of the dais with their concentrated death wish.)

TIBERIUS (*thickly*). She is dead, and I do not hear you laugh !

LAZARUS (*bending down—supplicatingly*). Miriam ! Call back to me ! Laugh ! (He pauses. A second of dead silence. Then, with a sound that is very like a sob, he kisses her on the lips.) I am lonely !

POMPEIA (*with savage malice—jeeringly*). See ! He weeps, Cæsar ! (She bursts into strident laughter.) Ha-ha-ha-ha !

CHORUS (*echoing her laughter*). Ha-ha-ha-ha ! There is fear ! There is death !

CROWD. There is death !
Ha-ha-ha-ha !

CALIGULA (*in a frenzy of despairing rage, hopping up and down*). Liar ! Charlatan ! Weakling ! How you have cheated Caligula ! (He suddenly

LAZARUS LAUGHED

slaps Lazarus viciously across the face.) There is death ! Laugh, if you dare !

TIBERIUS (*standing—in a sinister cold rage, the crueler because his dream of a cure for death is baffled, yet feeling his power as Cæsar triumphant nevertheless*). And I thought you might be a dæmon. I thought you might have a magic cure— (*With revengeful fury.*) But death is, and death is mine ! I shall make you pray for death ! And I shall make Death laugh at you ! Ha-ha-ha-ha ! (*In a frenzy as Lazarus neither makes a sound nor looks up.*) Laugh, Lazarus ! Laugh at yourself ! Laugh with me ! (*Then to his soldiers.*) Scourge him ! Make him laugh !

CALIGULA (*running to soldiers—fiercely*). Give me a scourge !

POMPEIA (*running to the soldiers—hysterically*). Ha-ha-ha-ha ! Let me beat him, Cæsar !

(*They group behind him. The rods and scourges are up-lifted over his back to strike, when in the dead expectant silence, Miriam's body is seen to rise in a writhing tortured last effort.*)

MIRIAM (*in a voice of unearthly sweetness*). Yes ! There is only life ! Lazarus, be not lonely ! (*She laughs and sinks back and is still.*)

(*A shuddering murmur of superstitious fear comes from them as they shrink back swiftly from Lazarus, remaining huddled one against the other. Pompeia*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

runs to the feet of Tiberius and crouches down on the steps below him, as if for protection, her terrified eyes on Miriam. Caligula runs to her and crouches beside and beneath her.)

LAZARUS (*kisses Miriam again and raises his head. His face is radiant with new faith and joy. He smiles with happiness and speaks to himself with a mocking affection as if to an amusing child*). That much remained hidden in me of the sad old Lazarus who died of self-pity—his loneliness ! Lonely no more ! Man's loneliness is but his fear of life ! Lonely no more ! Millions of laughing stars there are around me ! And laughing dust, born once of woman on this earth, now freed to dance ! New stars are born of dust eternally ! The old, grown mellow with God, burst into flaming seed ! The fields of infinite space are sown—and grass for sheep springs up on the hills of earth ! But there is no death, nor fear, nor loneliness ! There is only God's Eternal Laughter ! His Laughter flows into the lonely heart !

(*He begins to laugh, his laughter clear and ringing—the laughter of a conqueror arrogant with happiness and the pride of a new triumph. He bends and picks up the body of Miriam in his arms and, his head thrown back, laughing, he ascends the dais and places her on the table as on a bier. He touches one*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

hand on her breast, as if he were taking an oath to life on her heart, looks upward and laughs, his voice ringing more and more with a terrible unbearable power and beauty that beats those in the room into an abject submissive panic.)

(Tiberius grovels half under the table, his hands covering his ears, his face on the floor ; he is laughing with the agony and terror of death. Pompeia lies face down on the first step and beats it with her fists ; she is laughing with horror and self-loathing. Caligula, his hands clutching his head, pounds it against the edge of the steps ; he is laughing with grief and remorse. The rest, soldiers, slaves and the prostitutes of both sexes, writhe and twist distractedly, seeking to hide their heads against each other, beating each other and the floor with clenched hands. An agonized moan of supplicating laughter comes from them all.)

ALL. Ha-ha-ha-ha ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !
Let us die, Lazarus !
Mercy, Laughing One !
Mercy of death !
Ha-ha-ha-ha ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !

(But the laughter of Lazarus is as remote now as the laughter of a god.)

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *The same as previous scene—the same night a short while later. All the lamps are out except the one on the table on the dais which, placed beside the head of Miriam, shines down upon the white mask of her face. In the half-darkness, the walls are lost in shadow, the room seems immense, the dais nearer.*

Lazarus sits on the couch at the right on the dais. His face is strong and proud, although his eyes are fixed down on the face of Miriam. He seems more youthful still now, like a young son who keeps watch by the body of his mother, but at the same time retaining the aloof serenity of the statue of a god. His face expresses sorrow and a happiness that transcends sorrow.

On the other side of the table, at the end of the couch, Tiberius sits facing front, his elbows on his knees, his large hands with bloated veins hanging loosely. He keeps his gaze averted from the corpse. He talks to Lazarus half over his shoulder.

On the top step, Pompeia sits, facing right, her hands clasped about one knee, the other leg stretched down to the lower step. Her head is thrown back and she is gazing up into Lazarus' face.

On the step below her, Caligula squats on his haunches, his arms on his knees, his fists pressed to his temples. He is staring straight before him.

Only these four people are in the room now.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

TIBERIUS (*gloomily*). Was she dead, Dæmon, and was it thy power that recalled life to her body for that moment? Or was she still living and her words only the last desire of her love to comfort you, Lazarus? (*Lazarus does not reply.*) If thou dost not tell me, I must always doubt thee, Dæmon.

POMPEIA (*with a sigh of bewildered happiness, turns to Caligula*). I am glad he laughed, Caligula! Did I say I loved him before? Then it was only my body that wanted a slave. Now it is my heart that desires a master! Now I know love for the first time in my life!

CALIGULA (*bitterly*). Fool! What does he care for love? (*Sombrely*) He loves every one—but no one—not even me! (*He broods frowningly.*)

POMPEIA (*following her own thoughts*). And now that hag is dead he will need a woman, young and beautiful, to protect and comfort him, to make him a home and bear his children! (*She dreams, her eyes again fixed on Lazarus—then suddenly turning to Caligula.*) I am glad I lost our bet. But you must accept some other payment. Now I know love, I may not give myself to any man save him!

CALIGULA. I do not want you! What are you but another animal! Faugh! (*With a grimace of disgust.*) Pleasure is dirty and joyless! Or we who seek it are, which comes to the same thing. (*Then grimly.*) But our bet can rest.

LAZARUS LAUGHED

This is not the end. There may still be a chance for you to laugh at him !

POMPEIA. No ! Now I could not ! I should weep for his defeat !

TIBERIUS (*gloomily arguing, half to himself*). His laughter triumphed over me, but he has not brought her back to life. I think he knows no cure for another's death, as I had hoped. And I must always doubt that it was not some trick—(*harshly*) until I have tested him with his own life ! He cannot cheat me then ! (*A pause—arguing to himself.*) But he was dead—that much has been proved—and before he died he was old and sad. What did he find beyond there ? (*Suddenly—turning to Lazarus now.*) What did you find beyond death, Lazarus ?

LAZARUS (*exaltedly*). Life ! God's Eternal Laughter !

TIBERIUS (*shaking his head*). I want hope—for me, Tiberius Cæsar.

LAZARUS. What is—you ? But there is hope for Man ! Love is Man's hope—love for his life on earth, a noble love above suspicion and distrust ! Hitherto Man has always suspected his life, and in revenge and self-torture his love has been faithless ! He has even betrayed Eternity, his mother, with his slave he calls Immortal Soul ! (*He laughs softly, gaily, mockingly—then to Tiberius directly.*) Hope for you, Tiberius Cæsar ? Then dare to love Eternity without your fear

LAZARUS LAUGHED

desiring to possess her ! Be brave enough to be possessed !

TIBERIUS (*strangely*). My mother was the wife of Cæsar. (*Then dully*.) I do not understand.

LAZARUS. Men are too cowardly to understand ! And so the worms of their little fears eat them and grow fat and terrible and become their jealous gods they must appease with lies !

TIBERIUS (*wearily*). Your words are meaningless, Lazarus. You are a fool. All laughter is malice, all gods are dead, and life is a sickness.

LAZARUS (*laughs pityingly*). So say the race of men, whose lives are long dyings ! They evade their fear of death by becoming so sick of life that by the time death comes they are too lifeless to fear it ! Their disease triumphs over death—a noble victory called resignation ! “ We are sick,” they say, “ therefore there is no God in us, therefore there is no God ! ” Oh, if men would but interpret that first cry of man fresh from the womb as the laughter of one who even then says to his heart, “ It is my pride as God to become Man. Then let it be my pride as Man to recreate the God in me ! ” (*He laughs softly but with exultant pride*.)

POMPEIA (*laughing with him—proudly*). He will create a god in me ! I shall be proud !

CALIGULA (*pounding his temples with his fists—tortured*). I am Caligula. I was born in a camp among soldiers. My father was Germanicus, a

LAZARUS LAUGHED

hero, as all men know. But I do not understand this—and though I burst with pride, I cannot laugh with joy !

TIBERIUS (*gloomily*). Obscurities ! I have found nothing in life that merits pride. I am not proud of being Cæsar—and what is a god but a Cæsar over Cæsars ? If fools kneel and worship me because they fear me, should I be proud ? But Cæsar is a fact, and Tiberius, a man, is one, and I cling to these certainties—and I do not wish to die ! If I were sure of eternal sleep beyond there, deep rest and forgetfulness of all I have ever seen or heard or hated or loved on earth, I would gladly die ! But surely, Lazarus, nothing is sure—peace the least sure of all—and I fear there is no rest beyond there, that one remembers there as here and cannot sleep, that the mind goes on eternally the same—a long insomnia of memories and regrets and the ghosts of dreams one has poisoned to death passing with white bodies spotted by the leprous fingers of one's lusts. (*Bitterly*.) I fear the long nights now in which I lie awake and listen to Death dancing round me in the darkness, prancing to the drum beat of my heart ! (*He shudders.*) And I am afraid, Lazarus—afraid that there is no sleep beyond there, either !

LAZARUS. There is peace !

(*His words are like a benediction he pronounces upon them. Soothed in a mysterious, childlike way, they repeat the word after him, wonderingly.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

POMPEIA. Peace?

CALIGULA. Peace?

TIBERIUS. Peace? (*For a long moment there is complete silence. Then Tiberius sighs heavily, shaking his head.*) Peace! Another word is blurred into a senseless sigh by men's longing! A bubble of froth blown from the lips of the dying toward the stars! No! (*He grins bitterly—then looks at Lazarus—sombrely contemptuous and threatening.*) You are pleased to act the mysterious, Jew, but I shall solve you! (*Then with a lawyer-like incisiveness.*) There is one certainty about you and I must know the cause—for there must be a cause and a rational explanation! You were fifty when you died—

LAZARUS (*smiling mockingly*). Yes. When I died.

TIBERIUS (*unheeding*). And now your appearance is of one younger by a score. Not alone your appearance! You *are* young. I see the fact, the effect. And I demand an explanation of the cause without mystic nonsense or evasion. (*Threateningly.*) And I warn you to answer directly in plain words—and not to laugh, you understand!—not to dare!—or I shall lose patience with you and—(*with a grim smile*) I can be terrible! (*Lazarus smiles gently at him. He turns away with confused annoyance, then back to Lazarus, resuming his lawyer-like manner.*) What was it restored your youth? How did you contrive that your body reversed the natural process

LAZARUS LAUGHED

and grows younger? Is it a charm by which you invoke a supernatural force? Or is it a powder you dissolve in wine? Or a liquid? Or an unguent you rub into the skin to revitalize the old bones and tissues? Or—what is it, Lazarus?

LAZARUS (*gently*). I know that age and time are but timidities of thought.

TIBERIUS (*broodingly—as if he had not heard—persuasively*). Perhaps you ask yourself, what would Tiberius do with youth? Then, because you must have heard rumours of my depravity, you will conclude the old lecher desires youth for his lusts! (*He laughs harshly.*) Ha! Why, do not my faithful subjects draw pictures of an old buck goat upon the walls and write above them, Cæsar? And they are just. In self-contempt of Man I have made this man, myself, the most swinish and contemptible of men! Yes! In all this empire there is no man so base a hog as I! (*He grins bitterly and ironically.*) My claim to this excellence, at least, is not contested! Every one admits therein Tiberius is by right their Cæsar! (*He laughs bitterly.*) Ha! So who would believe Tiberius if he said, I want youth again because I loathe lust and long for purity!

LAZARUS (*gently*). I believe you, Cæsar.

TIBERIUS (*stares at him—deeply moved*). You—believe—? (*Then gruffly.*) You lie! You are not mad—and only a madman would believe

LAZARUS LAUGHED

another man ! (*Then confidingly, leaning over toward Lazarus.*) I know it is folly to speak—but—one gets old, one becomes talkative, one wishes to confess, to say the thing one has always kept hidden, to reveal one's unique truth—and there is so little time left—and one is alone ! Therefore the old—like children—talk to themselves, for they have reached that hopeless wisdom of experience which knows that though one were to cry it in the streets to multitudes, or whisper it in the kiss to one's beloved, the only ears that can ever hear one's secret are one's own ! (*He laughs bitterly.*) And so I talk aloud, Lazarus ! I talk to my loneliness !

LAZARUS (*simply*). I hear, Tiberius.

TIBERIUS (*again moved and confused—forcing a mocking smile*). Liar ! Eavesdropper ! You merely—listen ! (*Then he turns away.*) My mother, Livia, that strong woman, giving birth to me, desired not a child, but a Cæsar—just as, married to Augustus, she loved him not but loved herself as Cæsar's wife. She made me feel, in the proud questioning of her scornful eyes, that to win her mother love I must become Cæsar. She poisoned Prince Marcellus and young Gaius and Lucius that the way might be clear for me. I used to see their blood dance in red specks before my eyes when I looked at the sky. Now—(*he brushes his hand before his eyes*)—it is all a red blot ! I cannot distinguish. There have been too many. My mother—her blood is in that blot,

LAZARUS LAUGHED

for I revenged myself on her. I did not kill her, it is true, but I deprived her of her power and she died, as I knew she must, that powerful woman who bore me as a weapon ! The murder was subtle and cruel—how cruel only that passionate, deep-breasted woman unslaked by eighty years of devoured desires could know ! Too cruel ! I did not go to her funeral. I was afraid her closed eyes might open and look at me ! (*Then with almost a cry.*) I want youth, Lazarus, that I may play again about her feet with the love I felt for her before I learned to read her eyes ! (*He half sobs, bowing his head. A pause.*)

CALIGULA (*nudging Pompeia—with a crafty whisper*). Do you hear ? The old lecher talks to himself. He is becoming senile. He will soon die. And I shall be Cæsar. Then I shall laugh !

POMPEIA (*staring up at Lazarus' face, hearing only Caligula's words without their meaning*). No. My Lazarus does not laugh now. See. His mouth is silent—and a little sad, I think.

LAZARUS (*gently and comfortingly*). I hear, Tiberius.

TIBERIUS (*harshly*). I hated that woman, my mother, and I still hate her ! Have you ever loved, Lazarus ? (*Then with a glance at Miriam's body and a shuddering away from it—vaguely.*) I was forgetting her. I killed your love, too, did I not ? Well, I must ! I envy those who are loved. Where I can, I kill love—for retribution's

LAZARUS LAUGHED

sake—but much of it escapes me. (*Then harshly again.*) I loved Agrippina. We were married. A son was born to us. We were happy. Then that proud woman, my mother, saw my happiness. Was she jealous of my love? Or did she know no happy man would wish to be Cæsar? Well, she condemned my happiness to death. She whispered to Augustus and he ordered me to divorce Agrippina. I should have opened her veins and mine, and died with her. But my mother stayed by me, Agrippina was kept away, my mother spoke to me and spoke to me and even wept, that tall woman, strong as a great man, and I consented that my love be murdered. Then my mother married me to a whore. Why? The whore was Cæsar's daughter, true—but I feel that was not all of it, that my mother wished to keep me tortured that I might love her alone and long to be Cæsar! (*He laughs harshly.*) Ha! In brief, I married the whore, she tortured me, my mother's scheming prospered—that subtle and crafty woman!—and many years passed in being here and there, in doing this and that, in growing full of hate and revengeful ambition to be Cæsar. At last, Augustus died. I was Cæsar. Then I killed that whore, my wife, and I starved my mother's strength to death until she died, and I began to take pleasure in vengeance upon men, and pleasure in taking vengeance on myself. (*He grins horribly.*) It is all very simple, as you see! (*He suddenly starts to his feet—with harsh arrogance and pride, threateningly.*) Enough!

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Why do I tell you these old tales ? Must I explain to you why I want youth ? It is my whim ! I am Cæsar ! And now I must lie down and try to sleep ! And it is my command that you reveal the secret of your youth to me when I awake, or else—(*with malignant cruelty*)—I will have to revenge the death of a hope on you—and a hope at my age demands a terrible expiation on its slayer ! (*He walks down and starts to go off, right—then turns and addresses Lazarus with grim irony.*) Good night to you, Lazarus. And remember there shall be death while I am Cæsar ! (*He turns to go.*)

LAZARUS (*smiling affectionately at him, shakes his head*). Cæsar must believe in death. But does the husband of Agrippina ?

TIBERIUS (*stops short and stares at Lazarus, confused and stuttering*). What—what—do you mean, Lazarus ?

LAZARUS. I have heard your loneliness.

TIBERIUS (*cruelly and grimly again*). So much the more reason why my pride should kill you ! Remember that ! (*He turns and strides off into the darkness at right.*)

CALIGULA (*peers after him until sure he is gone—then gets up and begins a grotesque, hopping dance, singing a verse of the legionary's song.*)

A bold legionary am I
March, oh march on !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

A Roman eagle was my daddy,
My mother was a drunken drabby,
Oh, march on to the wars !

(He laughs gratingly, posturing and gesticulating up at Lazarus.)

Ha-ha-ha ! He is gone ! I can breathe ! His breath in the same air suffocates me ! The gods grant mine do the same for him ! But he is failing ! He talks to himself like a man in second childhood. His words are a thick babble I could not hear. They well from his lips like clots of blood from a reopened wound. I kept listening to the beating of his heart. It sounded slow, slower than when I last heard it. Did you detect that, Lazarus ? Once or twice I thought it faltered— *(He draws in his breath with an avid gasp—then laughs gratingly.)* Ha-ha-ha— *(Grandiloquently.)* Tiberius, the old buck-goat, will soon be gone, my friends, and in his place you will be blessed with the beautiful young god, Caligula ! Hail to Caligula ! Hail ! Ha-ha-ha—

(His laughter suddenly breaks off into a whimper, and he stands staring around him in a panic of fear that he has been overheard. He slinks noiselessly up the steps of the dais and squats coweringly at Lazarus' feet, blinking up at his face in monkey-wise, clutching Lazarus' hand in both of his. His teeth can be heard chattering together in nervous fear.)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*Pompeia, whose gaze has remained fixed on Lazarus' throughout, has gradually moved closer to him until she, too, is at his feet, half-kneeling beneath the table on which Miriam lies, side by side with Caligula but as oblivious of him as he is of her.*)

(*Having grown calmer now, Caligula speaks again—mournful and bewildered.*)

CALIGULA. Why should I love you, Lazarus ? Your laughter taunts me ! It insults Cæsar ! It denies Rome ! But I will warn you again. Escape ! To-night Tiberius' mood is to play sentimental, but to-morrow he will jeer while hyenas gnaw at your skull and lick your brain. And then—there is pain, Lazarus ! There is pain !

POMPEIA (*pressing her hand to her own heart—with a shudder*). Yes, there is pain !

LAZARUS (*smiling down on them—gently*). If you can answer Yes to pain, there is no pain !

POMPEIA (*passionately*). Yes ! Yes ! I love Lazarus !

CALIGULA (*with a bitter grin*). Do not take pain away from us ! It is our one truth. Without pain there is nothing—a nothingness in which even your laughter, Lazarus, is swallowed at one gulp like a whining gnat by the cretin's silence of immensity ! Ha-ha ! No, we must keep pain ! Especially Cæsar must ! Pain must twinkle with

LAZARUS LAUGHED

a mad mirth in a Cæsar's eyes—men's pain—or they would become dissatisfied and disrespectful ! Ha-ha ! (*He stops his grating laughter abruptly and continues mournfully.*) I am sick, Lazarus, sick of cruelty and lust and human flesh and all the imbecilities of pleasure—the unclean antics of half-witted children ! (*With a mounting agony of longing.*) I would be clean ! If I could only laugh your laughter, Lazarus ! That would purify my heart. For I could wish to love all men, as you love them—as I love you ! If only I did not fear them and despise them ! If I could only believe —believe in them—in life—in myself !—believe that one man or woman in the world knew and loved the real Caligula—then I might have faith in Caligula myself—then I might laugh your laughter !

LAZARUS (*suddenly, in a quiet but compelling voice.*) I, who know you, love you, Caligula. (*Gently patting his head.*) I love Caligula.

CALIGULA (*staring up at him in pathetic confusion*). You ? You ? You, Lazarus ? (*He begins to tremble all over as if in a seizure—chokingly.*) Beware ! It is not good—not just—to make fun of me—to laugh at my misery—saying you love— (*In a frenzy, he jumps to his feet threatening Lazarus.*) Are you trying to fool me, hypocrite ? Do you think I have become so abject that you dare—? Because I love you, do you presume—? Do you think I am your slave, dog of a Jew, that you can—insult—to my

LAZARUS LAUGHED

face—the heir of Cæsar— (*He stutters and stammers with rage, hopping up and down grotesquely, shaking his fist at Lazarus, who smiles at him affectionately as at a child in a tantrum.*)

LAZARUS (*catching his eyes and holding them with his glance—calmly*). Believe, Caligula !

CALIGULA (*again overcome—stuttering with strange terror*). Believe ? But I cannot ! I must not ! You cannot know me, if— You are a holy man ! You are a god in a mortal body—you can laugh with joy to be alive—while I— Oh, no, you cannot love me ! There is nothing in me at bottom but a despising and an evil eye ! You cannot ! You are only being kind ! (*Hysterically*) I do not want your kindness ! I hate your pity ! I am too proud ! I am too strong ! (*He collapses weeping, kneeling and clutching Lazarus' hand in both of his.*)

LAZARUS (*smiling*). You are so proud of being evil ! What if there is no evil ? What if there are only health and sickness ? Believe in the healthy god called Man in you ! Laugh at Caligula, the funny clown who beats the backside of his shadow with a bladder and thinks thereby he is Evil, the Enemy of God ! (*He suddenly lifts the face of Caligula and stares into his eyes.*) Believe ! What if you are a man and men are despicable ? Men are also unimportant ! Men pass ! Like rain into the sea ! The sea remains ! Man remains ! Man slowly arises from the past of the race of men that was his tomb of death ! For

LAZARUS LAUGHED

Man death is not ! Man, Son of God's Laughter, *is* ! (*He begins to laugh triumphantly, staring deep into Caligula's eyes.*) Is, Caligula ! Believe in the laughing god within you !

CALIGULA (*bursting suddenly into choking, joyful laughter—like a visionary*). I believe ! I believe there is love even for Caligula ! I can laugh—now—Lazarus ! Free laughter ! Clean ! No sickness ! No lust for death ! My corpse no longer rots in my heart ! The tomb is full of sunlight ! I am alive ! I who love Man, I who can love and laugh ! Listen, Lazarus ! I dream ! When I am Cæsar, I will devote my power to your truth. I will decree that there must be kindness and love ! I will make the Empire one great Blessed Isle ! Rome shall know happiness, it shall believe in life, it shall learn to laugh your laughter, Lazarus, or I—(*He raises his hand in an imperial autocratic gesture.*)

LAZARUS (*gaily mocking*). Or you will cut off its head ?

CALIGULA (*fiercely*). Yes ! I will—! (*Then meeting Lazarus' eyes, he beats his head with his fists crazily.*) Forgive me ! I forget ! I forget !

LAZARUS. Go out under the sky ! Let your heart climb on laughter to a star ! Then make it look down at earth, and watch Caligula commanding Life under pain of death to do his will ! (*He laughs.*)

CALIGULA (*laughing*). I will ! I do ! I laugh

LAZARUS LAUGHED

at him ! Caligula is a trained ape, a humped cripple ! Now I take him out under the sky, where I can watch his monkey tricks, where there is space for laughter and where this new joy, your love of me, may dance !

(Laughing clearly and exultantly, he runs out through the arched doorway at rear.)

LAZARUS (*stops laughing—shaking his head, almost sadly*). They forget ! It is too soon for laughter ! (*Then grinning at himself.*) What, Lazarus ? Are you, too, thinking in terms of time, old fool so soon to re-enter infinity ? (*He laughs with joyous self-mockery.*)

POMPEIA (*who has crept to his feet, kisses his hand passionately*). I love you, Lazarus !

LAZARUS (*stops laughing, and looks down at her gently*). And I love you, woman.

POMPEIA (*with a gasp of delight*). You ? (*She stares up into his eyes doubtfully, raising her face toward his.*) Then—put your arms around me. (*He does so, smiling gently.*) And hold me to you. (*He presses her closer to him.*) And kiss me. (*He kisses her on the forehead.*) No, on the lips ! (*He kisses her.* She flings her arms about his neck. *passionately and kisses him again and again—then slowly draws away—remains looking into his eyes a long time, shrinking back from him with bewildered pain which speedily turns to rage and revengeful hatred.*) No ! No ! It is my love, not Love ! I want you to know my love, to give me back love

LAZARUS LAUGHED

—for me—only for me—Pompeia—my body, my heart—me, a woman—not Woman, women ! Do I love Man, men ? I hate men ! I love you, Lazarus—a man—a lover—a father to children ! I want love—as you loved that woman there (*she points to Miriam*) that I poisoned for love of you ! But did you love her—or just Woman, wife and mother of men ? (*She stares—then as if reading admission in his eyes, she springs to her feet.*) Liar ! Cheat ! Hypocrite ! Thief ! (*Half hysterical with rage, pain and grief, she bends over Miriam and smoothes the hair back from her forehead.*) Poor wife ! Poor woman ! How he must have tortured you ! Now I remember the pity in your eyes when you looked at me ! Oh, how his soothing grey words must have pecked at the wound in your heart like doves with bloody beaks ! (*Then with sudden harshness.*) But perhaps you were too dull to understand, too poor and tired and ugly and old to care, too slavish—! Pah ! (*She turns away with contempt and faces Lazarus with revengeful hatred.*) Did you think I would take her place—become your slave, wait upon you, give you love and passion and beauty in exchange for phrases about man and gods—you who are neither a man nor a god but a dead thing without desire ! You dared to hope I would give my body, my love, to you ! (*She spits in his face and laughs harshly.*) You insolent fool ! I shall punish you ! You shall be tortured as you have tortured ! (*She laughs wildly—then steps down from the dais and*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

goes off right, crying distractedly.) Cæsar ! This man has made you a fool before all the world ! Torture him, Cæsar ! Now ! Let the people witness ! Send heralds to wake them ! Torture him, Cæsar, the man who laughs at you ! Ha-ha-ha-ha !

(Her laughter is caught up by all the Girls and Youths of the palace, who, as she disappears, led by their Chorus, pour in from each side of the room and dance forward to group themselves around the dais as in the previous scene, staring at Lazarus, laughing cruelly, falsely, stridently.)

CHORUS (*tauntingly*). Ha-ha-ha-ha !
Laugh now, Lazarus !
Let us see you laugh !
Ha-ha-ha-ha !

CROWD (*echoing*). Ha-ha-ha-ha !
Ha-ha-ha-ha !

LAZARUS (*moves, and immediately there is silence. He bends down and kisses Miriam and picks her up in his arms. Talking down to her face—with a tender smile*). Farewell ! You are home ! And now I will take your body home to earth ! Space is too far away, you said ! Home in the Earth ! There will be so much for you to do there ! Home ! Earth ! (*His voice trembling a bit.*) Farewell, body of Miriam. My grief is a lonely cry wailing in the home in my heart that you have left for ever ! (*Then exultantly.*) But what am

LAZARUS LAUGHED

I? Now your love has become Eternal Love! Now, since your life passed, I feel Eternal Life made nobler by your selflessness! Love has grown purer! The laughter of God is more profoundly tender! (*He looks up in an ecstasy and descends the dais, carrying her.*) Yes, that is it! That is it, my Miriam! (*Laughing softly and tenderly, he walks around the dais and carries the body out through the doorway in rear.*)

(*The Chorus and Youths and Girls make way for him in awed silence—then scurry around to right and left, forming an aisle through which he passes—then after he has gone out through the arch, they close into a semicircular group again, staring after him, and a whisper of strange, bewildered, tender laughter comes from them.*)

CHORUS (*in this whisper*). That is it!
Love is pure!
Laughter is tender!
Laugh!

CROWD (*echoing*). Laugh! Laugh!

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *The arena of an amphitheatre. It is just before dawn of the same night. Cæsar's throne is on the left at the extreme front, facing right, turned a little toward front. It is lighted by*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

four immense lamps. In front of the throne is a marble railing that tops the wall that encloses the arena. In the rear the towering pile of the circular amphitheatre is faintly outlined in deeper black against the dark sky.

Tiberius sits on the throne, his eyes fixed on the middle of the arena off right, where, bound to a high stake after he had been tortured, Lazarus is now being burnt alive over a huge pile of faggots. The crackling of the flames is heard. Their billowing rise and fall is reflected on the masked faces of the multitude who sit on the banked tiers of marble behind and to the rear of the throne, with their Chorus, seven men masked in Middle Age in the Servile, Hypocritical type, grouped on each side of the throne of Cæsar on a lower tier.

Half-kneeling before Tiberius, her chin resting on her hands on top of the marble rail, Pompeia also stares at Lazarus.

Before the curtain, the crackle of the flames and an uproar of human voices from the multitude, jeering, hooting, laughing at Lazarus in cruel mockery of his laughter. This sound has risen to its greatest volume as the curtain rises.

CHORUS (*chanting mockingly*). Ha-ha-ha-ha !
Burn and laugh !
Laugh now, Lazarus !
Ha-ha-ha-ha !

CROWD (*chanting with revengeful mockery*).
Ha-ha-ha-ha !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

TIBERIUS. Who laughs now, Lazarus—thou or Cæsar ? Ha-ha—! (*With awe.*) His flesh melts in the fire but his eyes shine with peace !

POMPEIA. How he looks at me ! (*Averting her eyes with a shudder.*) Command them to put out his eyes, Cæsar !

TIBERIUS (*harshly*). No. I want to read his eyes when they see death ! (*Then averting his face—guiltily.*) He is looking at me, not you. I should not have listened to your cries for his death.

POMPEIA (*turning to him again with a shudder of agony—beseechingly*). Have them put out his eyes, Cæsar ! They call to me !

TIBERIUS (*as if not hearing her—to himself*). Why do I feel remorse ? His laughter dies and is forgotten, and the hope it raised dies—(*With sudden excitement.*) And yet—he must know something—and if he would—even now he could tell— (*Suddenly rising to his feet he calls imploringly.*) Lazarus !

CHORUS (*chanting in a great imploring chorus now*). Lazarus !

CROWD (*echoing*). Lazarus !

SOLDIER'S VOICE (*calling from off beside the stake*). You had us gag him, Cæsar, so he might not laugh. Shall we cut away the gag ?

POMPEIA (*in terror*). No, Cæsar ! He will laugh ! And I will go to him ! (*Desperately.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

He will laugh at you, Cæsar—and the mob will laugh with him !

TIBERIUS (*struggles with himself—then calls*). Lazarus ! If you hear let your eyes answer, and I will grant the mercy of death to end your agony ! Is there hope of love somewhere for men on earth ?

CHORUS (*intoning as before*). Is there hope of love
For us on earth ?

CROWD. Hope of love
For us on earth !

SOLDIER'S VOICE. His eyes laugh, Cæsar !

TIBERIUS (*in a strange frenzy now*). Hear me, thou Dæmon of Laughter ! Hear and answer, I beseech thee, who alone hath known joy ! (*More and more wildly.*) How must we live ? Wherein lies happiness ?

CHORUS. Wherein lies happiness ?

CROWD. Wherein, happiness ?

TIBERIUS. Why are we born ? To what end must we die ?

CHORUS. Why are we born to die ?

CROWD. Why are we born ?

SOLDIER'S VOICE. His eyes laugh, Cæsar ! He is dying ! He would speak !

CHORUS AND CROWD (*in one great cry*). Cæsar ! Let Lazarus speak !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

POMPEIA (*terrified*). No, Cæsar ! He will laugh—and you will die—and I will go to him !

TIBERIUS (*torn—arguing with his fear*). But—he may know some hope— (*Then making his decision, with grim fatalism.*) Hope—or nothing ! (*Calls to the Soldiers.*) Let him speak !

CHORUS AND CROWD (*cheering*). Hail, Cæsar !

LAZARUS (*his voice comes, recognizably the voice of Lazarus, yet with a strange, fresh, clear quality of boyhood, gaily mocking with life*). Hail, Cæsar !

CROWD (*frantic with hope*). Hail, Lazarus !

TIBERIUS. Pull away the fire from him ! I see death in his eyes ! (*The flaming reflections in the banked, masked faces dance madly as the Soldiers rake back the fire from the stake. With a forced, taunting mockery.*) What do you say now, Lazarus ? You are dying !

CHORUS AND CROWD (*taking his tone—mockingly*). You are dying, Lazarus !

LAZARUS (*his voice a triumphant assertion of the victory of life over pain and death*). Yes !

TIBERIUS (*triumphant yet disappointed—with scorn and rage*). Ha ! You admit it, do you, coward ! Craven ! Knave ! Duper of fools ! Clown ! Liar ! Die ! I laugh at you ! Ha-ha-ha-ha—— (*His voice breaks chokingly*.)

CROWD (*led by their Chorus—in the same frenzy of disappointment, with all sorts of grotesque and obscene gestures and noises, thumbing their fingers ta*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

their noses, wagging them at their ears, sticking out their tongues, slapping their behinds, barking, crowing like roosters, howling, and hooting in every conceivable manner). Yah ! Yah ! Yellow Gut ! Bung-kisser ! Muckheel ! Scumwiper ! Liar ! Pig ! Jackal ! Die ! We laugh at you ! Ha-ha— (Their voices, too, break.)

POMPEIA (rising to her feet like one in a trance, staring toward Lazarus). They are tormenting him. I hear him crying to me ! (She moves to the top of the steps leading to the arena.)

LAZARUS (his voice thrilling with exultance). O men, fear not life ! You die—but there is no death for Man !

(He begins to laugh, and at the sound of his laughter, a great spell of silence settles upon all his hearers—then as his laughter rises, they begin to laugh with him.)

POMPEIA (descending the steps like a sleep-walker). I hear his laughter calling. I must go to him.

TIBERIUS (as if he realized something was happening that was against his will—trying feebly to be imperial). I command you not to laugh ! Cæsar commands— (Calling feebly to the Soldiers.) Put back the gag ! Stop his laughter !

(The laughter of Lazarus gaily and lovingly mocks back at him.)

SOLDIER'S VOICE (his voice gently remonstrating). We may not, Cæsar. We love his laughter !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*They laugh with him.*)

CHORUS AND CROWD (*in a soft, dreamy murmur*).

We love his laughter !

We laugh !

TIBERIUS (*dreamily*). Then—pile the fire back around him. High and higher ! Let him blaze to the stars ! I laugh with him !

SOLDIER'S VOICE (*gently and gravely*). That is just, Cæsar. We love men flaming toward the stars ! We laugh with him !

CHORUS AND CROWD (*as the flames, piled back and fed anew by the Soldiers, flare upward and are reflected on their masks in dancing waves of light*).

We love men flaming toward the stars !

We laugh !

POMPEIA (*in the arena*). The fire calls me. My burning heart calls for the fire !

(*She laughs softly and passes swiftly across the arena toward Lazarus.*)

TIBERIUS (*in a sort of childish complaint*). You must pardon me, Lazarus. This is my Cæsar's duty—to kill you ! You have no right to laugh —before all these people—at Cæsar. It is not kind. (*He sobs snuffingly—then begins to laugh at himself.*)

(*Suddenly the flames waver, die down, then shoot up again and Pompeia's laughter is heard for a moment, rising clear and passionately with that of Lazarus, then dying quickly out.*)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

SOLDIER's voice. A woman has thrown herself in the flames, Cæsar ! She laughs with Lazarus !

TIBERIUS (*in a sudden panicky flurry—feverishly*). Quick, Lazarus ! You will soon be silent ! Speak !—in the name of man's solitude—his agony of farewell—what is beyond there, Lazarus ? (*His voice has risen to a passionate entreaty.*)

CHORUS (*in a great pleading echo*). What is beyond there, Lazarus ?

CROWD. What is beyond ?

LAZARUS (*his voice speaking lovingly, with a surpassing clearness and exaltation*). Life ! Eternity ! Stars and dust ! God's Eternal Laughter !

(*His laughter bursts forth now in its highest pitch of ecstatic summons to the feast and sacrifice of Life, the Eternal.*)

(*The crowds laugh with him in a frenzied rhythmic chorus. Led by the Chorus, they pour down from the banked walls of the amphitheatre and dance in the flaring reflection of the flames strange wild measures of liberated joy. Tiberius stands on the raised dais laughing great shouts of clear, fearless laughter.*)

CHORUS (*chanting as they dance*). Laugh !

Laugh !

We are stars !

We are dust !

LAZARUS LAUGHED

We are gods !
We are laughter !

CROWD. We are dust !
We are gods !
Laugh ! Laugh !

CALIGULA (*enters from behind Tiberius. His aspect is wild, his hair dishevelled, his clothes torn, He is panting as if exhausted by running. He stares toward the flames stupidly—then screams despairingly above the chant*). Lazarus ! I come to save you ! Do you still live, Lazarus ?

TIBERIUS (*has been speaking. His words are now heard as the tumult momentarily dies down*). I have lived long enough ! I will die with Lazarus ! I no longer fear death ! I laugh ! I laugh at Cæsar ! I advise you, my brothers, fear not Cæsars ! Seek Man in the brotherhood of the dust ! Cæsar is your fear of Man ! I counsel you, laugh away your Cæsars !

CALIGULA (*with resentful jealousy and rage—in a voice rising to a scream*). What do I hear, Lazarus ? You laugh with your murderer ? You give him your laughter ? You have forgotten me—my love—you make him love you—you make him laugh at Cæsars—at me ! (*Suddenly springs on Tiberius in a fury and grabbing him by the throat chokes him, forcing him back on the throne—screaming.*) Die, traitor ! Die ! (*Tiberius' body relaxes in his hands, dead, and slips from the chair. Caligula rushes madly down the stairs*

LAZARUS LAUGHED

into the midst of the oblivious, laughing, dancing crowd, screaming.) You have betrayed me, dog of a Jew ! You have betrayed Cæsar ! (Beginning to be caught by the contagion of the laughter.) Ha-ah— No ! I will not laugh ! I will kill you ! Give me a spear ! (He snatches a spear from a soldier and fights his way drunkenly toward the flames, like a man half overcome by a poisonous gas, shouting, half-laughing in spite of himself, half-weeping with rage.) Ha-ha— The gods be with Cæsar Caligula ! O Immortal Gods, give thy brother strength ! You shall die, Lazarus—die— Ha-ha— ! (He disappears toward the flames, his spear held ready to stab.)

CHORUS AND CROWD (*who have been entirely oblivious of him—chanting*). Laugh ! Laugh !

We are gods !
We are dust !

LAZARUS (*at his first word there is a profound silence in which each dancer remains frozen in the last movement*). Hail, Caligula Cæsar ! Men forget ! (*He laughs with gay mockery as at a child.*)

CHORUS AND CROWD (*starting to laugh*). Laugh !
Laugh !

(Then there is a fierce cry of rage from Caligula and Lazarus' laughter ceases, and with it the laughter of the crowd turns to a wail of fear and lamentation.)

LAZARUS LAUGHED

CALIGULA (*dashes back among them waving his bloody spear and rushing up to the throne stands on it and strikes a grandiose pose*) I have killed God ! I am Death ! Death is Cæsar !

CHORUS AND CROWD (*turning and scurrying away —huddled in fleeing groups, crouching close to the ground like a multitude of terrified rats, their voices squeaky now with fright*). Hail, Cæsar ! Hail to Death !

(*They are gone.*)

CALIGULA (*keeping his absurd majestic pose, turns and addresses with rhetorical intoning, and flowing gestures, the body of Lazarus, high upon its stake, the flames below it now flickering fitfully*). Hail, Caligula ! Hero of heroes, conqueror of the Dæmon, Lazarus, who taught the treason that fear and death were dead ! But I am Lord of Fear ! I am Cæsar of Death ! And you, Lazarus, are carrion ! (*Then in a more conversational tone, putting aside his grandiose airs, confidentially*.) I had to kill you, Lazarus ! Surely your good sense tells you— You heard what the old fool, Tiberius, told the mob. A moment more and there would have been a revolution —no more Cæsars—and my dream—! (*He stops—bewilderedly*.) My dream ? Did I kill laughter ? I had just learned to laugh—with love ! (*More confusedly*.) I must be a little mad, Lazarus. It was one terror too many, to have been laughing your laughter in the night, to have been dreaming great yearning dreams of all the

LAZARUS LAUGHED

good my love might do for men when I was Cæsar—and then, to hear the old howling of mob lust, and to run here—and there a high white flame amidst the fire—you, Lazarus!—dying!—laughing with him—Tiberius—betraying me—who loved you, Lazarus! Yes, I became mad! I am mad! And I can laugh my own mad laughter, Lazarus—my own! Ha-ha-ha-ha! (*He laughs with a wild triumphant madness and again rhetorically, with sweeping gestures and ferocious capers.*) And all of men are vile and mad, and I shall be their madmen's Cæsar! (*He turns as if addressing an amphitheatre full of his subjects.*) O my good people, my faithful scum, my brother swine, Lazarus is dead and we have murdered great laughter, and it befits our madness to have done so, and it is befitting above all to have Caligula for Cæsar! (*Then savagely.*) Kneel down! Abase yourselves! I am your Cæsar and your God! Hail! (*He stands saluting himself with a crazy intensity that is not without grandeur. A pause.* Suddenly the silence seems to crush down upon him; he is aware that he is alone in the vast arena; he whirls about, looking around him as if he felt an assassin at his back; he lunges with his spear at imaginary foes, jumping, dodging from side to side, yelping.) Ho, there! Help! Help! Your Cæsar calls you! Help, my people! To the rescue! (*Suddenly throwing his spear away and sinking on his knees, his face toward Lazarus, supplicatingly.*) Lazarus! Forgive me! Help me! Fear kills me! Save me from death!

LAZARUS LAUGHED

(*He is grovelling in a paroxysm of terror, grinding his face in his fists as if to hide it.*)

LAZARUS (*his voice is heard in a gentle, expiring sigh of compassion, followed by a faint dying note of laughter that rises and is lost in the sky like the flight of his soul back into the womb of Infinity.*) Fear not, Caligula ! There is no death !

CALIGULA (*lifts his head at the first sound and rises with the laughter to his feet, until, as it is finally lost, he is on tip-toes, his arms straining upward to the sky, a tender, childish laughter of love on his lips.*). I laugh, Lazarus ! I laugh with you ! (*Then grief-stricken.*) Lazarus ! (*He hides his face in his hands, weeping.*) No more ! (*Then beats his head with his fists.*) I will remember ! I will ! (*Then suddenly, with a return to grotesqueness— harshly.*) All the same, I killed him and I proved there is death ! (*Immediately overcome by remorse, grovelling and beating himself.*) Fool ! Madman ! Forgive me, Lazarus ! Men forget !

CURTAIN

Dynamo

Characters

REVEREND HUTCHINS LIGHT.

AMELIA, *his wife.*

REUBEN, *their son.*

RAMSAY FIFE, *superintendent of a hydro-electric plant.*

MAY, *his wife.*

ADA, *their daughter.*

JENNINGS, *an operator at the plant.*

GENERAL SCENE

Act One

The exterior of the homes of the Lights and the Fifes in a small town in Connecticut. These houses stand side by side, facing front, on the street. They are set close together, separated by narrow strips of lawn, with a lilac hedge at centre marking the boundary-line between the two properties, and a row of tall maples in the background behind the yards and the two houses. The Fife house, a small brownish-tinted modern stucco bungalow type, recently built, is at left ; the Light home, a little old New England white frame cottage with green shutters, at right. Only the half-sections of the two houses are visible which are nearest to each other, the one containing the Fife sitting-room, with Ramsay's and May's bedroom directly above it, and the section of the Lights' home in which are their sitting-room and Reuben's bedroom on the floor above.

As the separate scenes of Part One require, the front walls of these rooms are removed to show the different interiors. All these rooms are small, the ones in the Light home particularly so.

It is the month of May of the present day. The lilacs are in bloom, the grass is a fresh green.

SCENES

SCENE I. The Light sitting-room and Reuben's bedroom above it.

DYNAMO

- SCENE 2. The Fife sitting-room with Ramsay's
and May's bedroom on the floor
above.
- SCENE 3. The Light and Fife sitting-rooms.
- SCENE 4. Reuben's bedroom.

Act Two

- SCENE 1. Same as Act One.
Fifteen months later.
The Light sitting-room.
- SCENE 2. Reuben's bedroom. Night of the same
day.
- SCENE 3. Exterior of the hydro-electric power
plant near the town. Half an hour
later.

Act Three

- GENERAL SCENE. The Hydro-Electric Power
Plant near the town.
Four months later.

Scene One. Exterior of the plant.

Scene Two. Interiors of the upper and lower
switch galleries.

Scene Three. Interiors of the two switch gal-
leries, the switchboard room,
and the dynamo room.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *It is evening. In the background between the two houses the outlines of the maples are black against a sky pale with the light of a quarter-moon. Now and then there is a faint flash of lightning from far off and a low mumble of thunder.*

The Light sitting-room and Reuben's bedroom are revealed. Both are sparsely furnished with the bare necessities. Reuben's bedroom contains an old four-poster bed, front, facing left, a small table on which are stacked his textbooks, and a chair in left corner, front. In the left wall is a window. A washstand with bowl and pitcher is in the left corner, rear, and an old-fashioned bureau in the middle of the rear wall. To the right of this is the door of a clothes closet. The door to the hall and the stairs is at right, rear. There is a lighted kerosene lamp on the table.

In the sitting-room below there is a table at centre, front. The minister's arm-chair is beside this on the left. His wife's rocker is at the right of the table. Farther right is another chair. Three small hooked rugs are on the floor. Several framed prints of scenes from the Bible hang on the walls. The minister's small desk is placed against the left wall beside the window. On the table at centre are a cheap oil reading-lamp, a Bible, and some magazines.

DYNAMO

There is a door to the hall in the right wall, rear.

The ceilings of both rooms are low, the wallpaper so faded that the ugliness of its colour and design has been toned down into a neutral blur. But everything in this home is spotlessly clean and in order, the old furniture and floors are oiled and polished.

The Reverend Hutchins Light is seated in his arm-chair, his wife in her rocker. He is a man in his early sixties, slightly under medium height, ponderously built. His face is square, ribbed with wrinkles, the forehead low, the nose heavy, the eyes small and grey blue, the reddish hair grizzled and bushy, the stubborn jaw weakened by a big indecisive mouth. His voice is the bullying one of a sermonizer who is the victim of an inner uncertainty that compensates itself by being boomerangingly over-assertive.

His wife, Amelia, is fifteen years his junior and appears even younger. Her stout figure is still firm and active, with large breasts and broad, round hips. She must have been pretty as a girl. Even now her dark-complexioned face, with its big brown eyes and wavy black hair, retains its attractiveness although it has grown fleshy. Her expression is one of virtuous resignation. Only her mouth is rebellious. It is a thin small mouth, determined and stubborn, sensual and selfish.

In the bedroom above, their son, Reuben, is sitting in his shirt-sleeves on the side of his bed.

DYNAMO

He is seventeen, tall and thin. His eyes are large, shy and sensitive, of the same grey blue as his father's. His mouth is like his father's. His jaw is stubborn, his thick hair curly and reddish-blond. He speaks timidly and hesitatingly, as a much younger boy might. His natural voice has an almost feminine gentleness. In intercourse with the world, however, he instinctively imitates his father's tone, booming self-protectively.

Hutchins Light has a pad on which he has been trying to make notes for his next sermon, but his mind is abstracted. He stares before him with the resentful air of one brooding over a wrong done him and unsuccessfully plotting revenge. His wife is pretending to read, but her thoughts are actively elsewhere, and she glances inquisitively at her husband from under lowered lids.

In the bedroom above, Reuben's eyes are turned toward the window, his face eager with dreams.

LIGHT (*arguing tormentedly within himself*). What did he mean about Reuben? . . . that foul-mouthed scoundrel! . . . "Better call in your son or some night I might mistake his odour of sanctity for a skunk's and fill his" . . . filthy word belching from his grinning mouth! . . . "full of buckshot" . . . I heard the corner loafers laugh . . . and I had to slink by and pretend not to hear! . . . If it weren't for my cloth I'd have beaten his face to a bloody pulp! . . .

DYNAMO

I'd . . . ! (*Suddenly horrified at himself.*) A murderer's thoughts ! . . . Lord God, forgive me ! . . .

MRS. LIGHT (*glances at him and speaks in a gentle tone that carries a challenging quality.*) Hutchins, do you realize Reuben will graduate from school in less than a month ?

LIGHT (*oblivious*). But, Lord, Thou knowest what a thorn in the flesh that atheist, Fife, has been since the devil brought him next door ! . . . (*Protesting petulantly to his God.*) How long, O Lord ? . . . does not his foul ranting begin to try Thy patience ? . . . is not the time ripe to smite this blasphemer who defies Thee publicly to strike him dead ? . . . Lord God of Hosts, why dost Thou not strike him ? . . . If Thou didst, I would proclaim the awful warning of it over all America ! . . . I would convert multitudes, as it was once my dream to do ! . . .

MRS. LIGHT. Hutchins, please pay attention to what I'm saying. Don't you think we ought to decide definitely about Reuben's future ?

LIGHT (*turns to her with a frown*). I have decided. He shall follow in my footsteps—mine and those of my father before me, and his father before him. It is God's manifest will ! (*He presses his lips tightly together—an effort to appear implacable that gives his face the expression of a balky animal's.*)

DYNAMO

MRS. LIGHT (*thinks scornfully*). He is always so sure of what God wills ! . . . but Reuben'll never be a minister if I can prevent it ! . . . I'd rather see him dead than go through the poverty and humiliation I've had to face ! . . . Reuben's got to go to college . . . then into business . . . marry a nice girl with money . . . he doesn't care anything about girls yet, thank goodness !

(*She speaks in a meek persuasive tone.*) Each of us must judge about Reuben according to the light vouchsafed by God. He doesn't feel any call to the ministry and I think it would be a great sin if—

LIGHT (*his voice booming*). And I tell you, Amelia, it is God's will !

REUBEN (*hearing his father's voice, jumps to his feet and stares down toward the room with an expression of boyish apprehension*). What's he shouting about ? . . . has he heard about Ada and me ? . . . he'll raise the roof ! . . . but Mother'll take my side against him . . . she's always sided with me . . . and she won't hate Ada when she knows I love her . . . (*Then resentfully*.) What do I care about him anyway ? . . . he hates Fife because he's scared of him . . . he's scared to take up Fife's challenge to debate about whether there's a God or not . . . when Fife took out his watch and said if there was a God let Him prove it by striking him dead in five minutes, why was it nothing happened ? . . . I should think if . . . (*He looks around uneasily, afraid of where his thoughts are leading him. A faint flash of lightning*

DYNAMO

from the distant storm flickers through his window. He starts guiltily and hastily makes a reassuring declaration of faith.) Of course there's a God! . . . He wouldn't pay any attention to a fool like Fife, that's all! . . .

LIGHT. I believe that storm must be coming this way. (*He gets to his feet—a bit shamefacedly.*) I think I'll close the shutters.

MRS. LIGHT. But it'll make it so dreadfully close in here! (*Then seeing his ashamed look, she smiles.*) Oh, all right, close them if you're getting scared.

LIGHT (*his dignity ruffled, turns his back on her and goes to the window*). Lightning gets on lots of people's nerves without their being afraid of it.

REUBEN. Aw, what's the matter with me? . . . that lightning had nothing to do with what I was thinking . . . (*He goes to the window and looks over toward the Fife home.*) She said she'd put a record on the Victrola as soon as she was free . . . then I was to meet her down by the lilacs . . . (*He breathes in the spring.*) Gee, those lilacs smell sweet! . . . I wish she'd hurry up! . . . I've got to get up my nerve and tell her I love her . . .

LIGHT (*stands by the window and sniffs the air*). Can you smell the perfume of the lilacs, Amelia? Do you remember our first spring here?

MRS. LIGHT. Of course. (*Then, after a pause, her voice turned bitter.*) Twenty-three years!

DYNAMO

It's a long time to live in this awful little house ! Hutchins, are you ever going to insist that they instal electric lighting here ? It's a shame the way they deny you the ordinary comforts of life !

LIGHT (*turns away and leans out of the window, staring into the night.*) Comforts of life ! . . . she has always desired the comfortable path . . . where the spirit decays in the sinful sloth of the flesh . . .

(*From the open, curtained windows of the Fife living-room a burst of laughter is heard—Fife's voice, sardonic and malicious. Light draws back into the room, muttering viciously.*) Scum of the earth ! (*Then turning on his wife.*) Tell me, has Reuben been having anything to do with that cursed pack next door ? That scoundrel called something at me on the street to-day that made me think—

MRS. LIGHT (*impatiently*). Don't you know that man well enough by this time not to pay attention to his trying to rile you ?

LIGHT. Then answer me this : why has Reuben taken such a sudden notion to going out in the evening lately ?

MRS. LIGHT. Do you expect a boy of his age to stay in like a poor stick-in-the-mud just because he happens to be a minister's son—especially when it's spring !

LIGHT. I remembered that it's spring—and I've just remembered that Fife has a daughter !

DYNAMO

MRS. LIGHT. That painted flapper with her skirts hitched up over her knees ! Do you think for one moment that Reuben, who never looks at girls anyway—and knowing what her father is !—Really, Hutchins, you're getting just too stupid !

(*From the Fife house comes the sound of a Victrola starting a jazz record.*)

REUBEN (*starts from his dream by the window upstairs*). That's her signal ! . . . (*He hurriedly puts on his coat*.) I better sneak out the back . . . (*He blows out the light and makes his way carefully out the bedroom door in right, rear*.)

LIGHT (*listening to the Victrola, fixes his eyes on his wife combatively*). You may call me as stupid as you like, but I insist there was something back of what that Fife said about Reuben. He sneered that we'd better keep him home at night and insinuated he was hanging around their place. The thought of that girl of his never entered my head until a moment ago—but what else could he mean ? I'm going to face Reuben with it right now and we'll see what he has to say for himself !

MRS. LIGHT (*sharply*). Now don't you go preaching at him again ! You better let me talk to him first. He's never lied to me. (*She goes toward the door in rear, plainly worried now, but trying to make little of it*.) You're always so ready to believe the worst of him ! I know it's all nonsense ! (*She goes out*.)

DYNAMO

LIGHT (*sits thinking gloomily*). Never lied to her . . . she means he does to me . . . why? . . . have I been too stern? . . . but even when he was little I sensed in him his mother's rebellious spirit . . . and now . . . if it is Fife's daughter . . . what a feather in that blasphemer's cap to corrupt my son! . . . how the gossips would sneer at me! . . . (*This thought drives him frantic—he paces up and down trying vainly to calm himself.*) No, no! . . . Reuben could never be guilty of so base a treachery! . . . (*He sits down by the table and, picking up his Bible, begins to read in a determined effort to get his mind off the subject.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*can be dimly made out entering the bedroom above just as Reuben, coming from the back door of the house, slinks stealthily around the rear corner across the patch of moonlit lawn to the shadow of the lilacs. Keeping in this shadow he moves down until he comes to a small gap that is almost at the end of the hedge, front. He stands by this, waiting nervously, peering through the gap at the Fife house. Mrs. Light thinks worriedly*). Gone to bed? . . . so early? . . . was he sick and didn't tell me? . . . (*She has come to the bed—with sudden fear.*) He's not here! . . . he must have sneaked out! . . . the first time he ever did such a thing! . . . but how do I know it's the first? . . . all the evenings I thought he was here studying! . . . it can only mean one thing! . . . a girl! . . . not a good girl! . . . it must be that Fife girl! . . . but I simply can't believe! . . . (*She goes to the window, peering out but keeping her head carefully inside—with fierce jealousy.*) That

dirty little . . . I'd like to see her try to catch my Reuben! . . . (*There is a strong flash of distant lightning that suddenly reveals Reuben in his hiding-place by the hedge. She gives a gasp.*) Oh! . . . there he is! . . . watching their house! . . . I've got to make sure! . . . Oh, Reuben, I can't believe it, you've never noticed girls! . . .

There is darkness for a moment—(as if the moon had passed behind a cloud)—to mark the end of SCENE ONE. No time elapses between SCENES ONE and TWO.

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *When it grows light again the outer walls of the two rooms in the Light home have been replaced, while the interiors of the Fife sitting-room and the couple's bedroom above it are now revealed. There is one small window on the top floor front of the Light home, two on the ground floor. Mrs. Light's head can be seen peering out of the side bedroom window at Reuben, crouched in the shadow of the lilacs. The two rooms in the Fife home, bright with all their electric lights on, are of a glaring newness. There is a table at centre, front, in the sitting-room, a Victrola in the rear corner, left, near the door in the left wall which leads to the hall. In the right wall are three windows looking out on the lawn toward the lilac hedge and the Light home. These windows are repeated in the same series in the bedroom above. The bed is*

DYNAMO

at left, front, its head against the left wall. In the same wall to the rear of the bed, is the door. There is a dressing table with a big mirror against the rear wall, right, near the windows.

Ramsay Fife is seated at the left of the table, glancing through the pages of a technical book on Hydro-Electric Engineering. His wife is lying back in a chaise longue that she has pushed close to the windows on the right so she can stare up at the sky.

Fife is a small wiry man of fifty, of Scotch-Irish origin, with a sharp face and keen black eyes. His thin mouth is full of the malicious humour of the practical joker. He has a biting tongue, but at bottom is a good-natured man except where the religious bigotry of his atheism is concerned.

His wife is tall and stout, weighing well over two hundred. Her face must have once been one of those rosy-cheeked pretty doll-like faces, and in spite of its fat, it has kept its girlish naïveté and fresh complexion. Her figure is not formless nor flabby. It suggests, rather, an inert strength. A mass of heavy copper-coloured hair is piled without apparent design around her face. Her mouth is small, with full lips. Her eyes are round and dark blue. Their expression is blank and dreamy. Her voice is sentimental and wondering. She is about forty years old.

Their daughter, Ada, sixteen, who is upstairs in the bedroom putting on a heavy make-up of

DYNAMO

rouge and mascara, resembles her father more than her mother. She has his alert quality. Her pretty face, with her mother's big blue eyes, is alive and keen, her mouth has a touch of her father's malicious humour. Her brown hair is boyishly bobbed. Her manner is self-assertive and consciously slangy. She is at the stage where being a hardened flapper is her frank ambition as her short skirts and obtrusive make-up give evidence. Beneath her flip talk, however, one senses a strong trace of her mother's sentimentality.

MRS. FIFE (*dreaming sentimentally*). I hear Ada upstairs . . . she's primping up before my mirror . . . she's falling in love . . . it's nice to be in love in May . . . I love May better than any other month . . . May is when I first met Ramsay . . . it's warm to-night . . . I mustn't forget to make Ramsay change to his summer underwear this week . . . he always wears his heavies too long and gets prickly heat and then he's terrible cross . . .

FIFE (*reading—disgustedly*). "Hydro-Electric engineering" . . . it's studying this stuff gives those stuck-up engineers their diplomas . . . "Frequency and number of phases" . . . "Inherent Regulations" . . . "Parallel Working" . . . "Wave Form" . . . diagrams and equations! . . . "The kinetic energy of a rotor of diameter D and axial length L, running at a speed of rotation n , is theoretically proportional to $D^4 L n^2$ " . . . arrh! . . . the devil take their the-

DYNAMO

ories! . . . when anything goes wrong at the plant it's me who fixes it without any theory! . . .

(*He tosses the book on the table and speaks to his wife.*) I wish Townsend wouldn't go forcing his books on me, telling me I owe it to myself to pass for engineer's papers. (*With a chuckle.*) Him arguing with me and at the same time admitting "Fife, you know a damn sight more about this game than I do."

MRS. FIFE (*mooning at him with adoring eyes—simply*). You know more than anyone, Ramsay.

FIFE (*pleased, but amused—teasing her as he would a big child*). Oho, I do, do I? How the hell do you know? (*Then complacently.*) Well, I do know more than most. There isn't a damn job in the game I haven't had a hand at some time or another.

(*He looks at her and sees she is not listening any more.*) Look at her! . . . in a dope dream again . . . I might as well be married to a cow . . . (*Then amusedly.*) Well, she's a damn funny woman . . . I've never seen her equal anywhere . . .

(*He sees the newspaper on the table and reaches for it. He glances at the headlines and settles down to reading with a grunt of awakened interest.*)

MRS. FIFE (*has again fallen to dreaming sentimentally of the past*). When I first met Ramsay he was a linesman . . . I loved him at first sight . . . he was so romantic looking with those steel

climbing things on his legs . . . and he wore a coloured handkerchief round his neck just like a cowboy . . . Pa and Ma warned me linesmen were no good . . . they just ruined you and went their way . . . they were wrong about Ramsay . . . except he did ruin me . . . I said, why is it wrong when I love him? . . . Pa yelled to get out, I'd disgraced the family . . . I never expected Ramsay'd marry me . . . he was the roving kind . . . but as soon as he knew he'd got me into trouble he spoke right up . . . "Oh, hell, then I guess I've got to marry you" . . . and I said yes, and I was awful happy . . . and five months after Ada was born and he was crazy about her from the first . . . and we've all been happy ever since . . . (*She sighs contentedly.*)

ADA (*in the bedroom above, finishes making up and inspects herself critically in the mirror—approvingly.*) I got to hand it to you, baby, you're there! . . . Gosh, how long is it since I put on that record? . . . Rube'll be waiting . . . he's as bashful as a kid . . . but that's what I like about him . . . I'm sick of these fresh guys that think all they have to do is wink and you fall! . . . Rube has got honest-to-God feelings . . . but of course, I'd never love him . . . he's too big a Mamma's boy for me . . . (*She goes to the door and puts her hand on the switch.*) Well, let's go . . . I'm dying to see if he'll have nerve enough to kiss me . . . (*She turns out the light.*)

REUBEN (*crouched by the hedge, gives a start as a flash of lightning flickers over the sky.*) Gosh, I wish Ada'd hurry up . . . this isn't much fun . . . I'm losing all my nerve waiting . . .

DYNAMO

MRS. LIGHT (*bending out of the window in Reuben's bedroom—in suspense between suspicion and hope*). She doesn't seem to be coming . . . maybe it's only some game he's playing . . . waiting to scare some friend of his . . .

FIFE (*looking up from his paper with a snort of rage and disgust just as Ada enters the room*). The bloody swinepot !

ADA (*comes and puts an arm around his shoulder teasingly*). What's the bad news, Pop ? Has another Fundamentalist been denying Darwin ?

FIFE (*boiling over with indignation, thrusting the paper on her, his finger pointing out the article*). Read this and you won't joke about it ! (*As Ada begins to read, he speaks to his wife*.) Of all the yellow tricks !

MRS. FIFE (*coming out of her dream with a start*). What, Ramsay ?

FIFE. This story in the paper ! There was a man in Ohio many years back killed another fellow in a fight about a girl. He got twenty years for it, but the girl helped him to escape and they both got clean away to the Coast, where he settled down under another name and they were married and had a daughter. He became one of the town's best citizens, and damned if his daughter didn't get engaged to the minister's son ! Then, just before the wedding, the old man feels he's honour bound to tell his future son-in-law the secret of his past ; so the damned idiot blathers the whole

DYNAMO

story of his killing the man and breaking jail ! And what do you suppose that young skunk does ? Breaks off with the girl and goes to the police with the story, saying he's bound by his conscience to squeal on him !

ADA (*who has finished reading the story*). Phew ! Some louse, that boy !

FIFE. Arrh ! They're all the same, the Bible-punching breed ! (*Then with a touch of severity.*) And mind you bear that in mind, young lady, when you're fooling with that young ass next door !

ADA. Hey listen, Pop ! Honestly, I think you've got a nerve to— Why, it was you said to start up an acquaintance with him, when I told you I'd caught him staring at me, because you knew how it'd get his old man's goat !

FIFE (*his sense of humour returning—with a malicious grin*). Aye, it will that ! I gave him a strong hint on the street to-day that upset him. Oh, if you'd only make a prize jackass of that yellow Nancy son of his !

ADA. Say, why have you got it in for Rube so ? He's not to blame for his father. (*Then hastily.*) Not that it's anything in my young life. I'm simply having fun kidding him along. (*Then defensively again.*) But Rube's a good scout—in his way. He isn't yellow.

MRS. FIFE (*suddenly—with a placid certainty*). You're falling in love, Ada.

DYNAMO

ADA (*confused*). Aw, Mom, where d'you get that stuff?

FIFE (*has glanced at her with suspicion*). So you don't believe that lad's yellow, don't you? What'll you bet he isn't? (*Then as she doesn't answer*.) I dare you to bring him in to-night, and let me talk to him and you listen, and if I don't show him up yellow then I'll buy you the best dress you can find in the town! (*As she hesitates—tauntingly*.) Are you afraid to take me up?

ADA (*with defensive flippancy, turns to go*). I'll think about it. There's a dress in Steele's I've had my eye on. (*She goes out the door on left*.)

FIFE (*looks after her—frowning*). She acts queer about him . . . it's time I took a hand in this . . . I've got to fix up a scheme on him quick . . . she'll bring him back if she has to drag him . . .

ADA (*has come out of the house by the front door, off left, and enters from the left, then hesitates for a moment, debating with herself*). Shall I make him come in? . . . he'll be scared stiff! . . . but Pop was only bluffing . . . well, I'll just call his bluff! . . . He can't get away with that stuff with me! . . . (*She walks toward the gap in the hedge*.)

MRS. LIGHT (*has caught a glimpse of her from the window*). There she comes now! . . .

ADA (*calling*). Rube.

REUBEN (*comes through the hedge to her—sheepishly*). Hello, Ada. (*Then, as he stands*

DYNAMO

beside her, looking down into her face, a sudden thrill of desire almost overcomes his timidity.) Gosh, Ada—you're pretty in the moonlight. I—I wish—*(His courage fails him—lamely.)* It's certainly grand to-night, isn't it ?

ADA. Yeah. It's great. *(She takes one of his hands.)* Come on in my house and meet Pop. I want you to see he isn't the devil out of hell your old man makes him out to be.

REUBEN *(immediately terrified).* I can't, Ada ! You know I can't ! Why don't we walk the same as—

ADA. I'm sick of walking. *(As he still holds back—tauntingly.)* Are you scared Pop will eat you ? You make me sick, Rube !

REUBEN. It's not because I'm scared of your father ; it's because—

ADA. Afraid your Mamma would spank you if she found out ? *(Then as he still hesitates.)* Oh, very well, you know what you can do, don't you ? *(She turns her back on him and walks away.)*

REUBEN. Ada ! Wait a minute ! Please don't get sore ! I'll come !

ADA. Good boy ! *(She suddenly raises herself on tiptoe and kisses him—with a little laugh.)* There ! That's to help keep your nerve up !

REUBEN *(a wave of passion coming over him, grabs her by the shoulders and bends his face close to hers).* Ada !

DYNAMO

ADA. Ouch ! That hurts, Rube !

REUBEN. I don't care if it does ! I love you, Ada ! (*He tries to kiss her.*)

ADA (*struggling away from him*). Hey, cut it out ! What do you think I am ? (*Then, as, brought back to himself, he releases her in shamefaced confusion, she adds tartly, her confidence restored and her temper a bit ruffled.*) Listen here, Rube, just because I kissed you in fun, don't get too fresh !

REUBEN. I—I didn't mean nothing bad—honest I didn't !

ADA. All right, only don't get rough again. (*Taking his hand—in a bullying tone.*) Come on ! Let's go in !

(*Reuben follows her off left mechanically, a look of growing dread on his face.*)

MRS. LIGHT. She kissed him ! . . . the brazen little harlot ! . . . where is she taking him ? . . . I've got to stop her ! . . .

(*She draws back quickly from the window.*)

FIFE (*irritably*). May the devil kill me if I can think up a good scheme . . .

(*He turns his exasperation on his wife.*) How can I think in the same room with you ? It's like trying to swim in glue ! For God's sake, get out of here !

MRS. FIFE (*raises herself to her feet placidly, with-*

DYNAMO

out a trace of resentment). I'll go upstairs and read the paper.

FIFE (*starts to thrust the paper on her*). Here you are then ! (*But as he does so his eye lights on the same headline that had attracted his attention before and suddenly he has an inspiration and grins elatedly.*) By God, I've got it, May ! I'll try that on him ! All the pious folks in this town think I've a bad record behind me— (*He pushes the paper into her hands.*) Get out of here quick ! I don't want you around to give me away !

(*She goes out. He waits, looking at the door, a grin of malicious expectancy on his face. At this moment Mrs. Light, who has come out by her kitchen door, appears around the corner of her house and slinks hurriedly across the patch of lawn to the shadow of the lilacs at the extreme edge of the hedge, front.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*peers stealthily around the corner of the hedge down the street—in an extreme state of agitation*). I can't see them . . . they're hiding somewhere . . . she'll be kissing him . . . oh, just wait till I tell her what I think of her ! . . . (*She starts out of the shadow of the lilacs as if to go down the street, but the brightness of the moonlight frightens her and she moves quickly back into the shadow.*) Supposing anyone should see me ! . . . oh, I don't know what to do ! . . . that nasty wicked boy ! . . . he'll be punished good for this ! . . .

DYNAMO

(*There is darkness again for a moment, to mark the end of SCENE TWO. No time elapses between SCENES TWO and THREE.*)

SCENE THREE

SCENE. *When the light comes on again, the wall of the Fife bedroom has been replaced. Their sitting-room is revealed as before with Fife still sitting looking expectantly at the door. And now the interior of the Light sitting-room is again shown with Light sitting as at the end of SCENE ONE. He holds the open Bible but he is staring moodily over it. Mrs. Light, as before, is hiding in the shadow of the lilac hedge, peering down the road, ashamed of her position and afraid she will be discovered.*

LIGHT (*thinking gloomily*). I must be honest with myself . . . who am I to cast the first stone at Reuben if he desires a woman ? . . . hasn't my love for Amelia been one long desire of the senses ? . . . I should understand Reuben's weakness and forgive him . . . (*Then his resentment smouldering up*.) But to betray me to Fife ! . . . that would go deeper ! . . . it would be treachery to God ! . . .

MRS. FIFE (*leans out of the front window of the bedroom upstairs*). I don't want to read the paper . . . I'd rather look at the moon . . . (*Mooning up at the moon*.) Ada loves that Light boy . . . he must be nice . . . he isn't to blame because his father believes in religion . . . maybe his father is nice too if you got to know him off the

DYNAMO

job . . . Ramsay is always so cranky when he's at the plant . . . I love the plant . . . I love the dynamos . . . I could sit for ever and listen to them sing . . . they're always singing about everything in the world . . .

(*She hums to herself for a moment—an imitation of the metallic purr of a dynamo.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*hearing this noise, looks up around the corner of the hedge and sees her and immediately dissolves into abject shame and fright*). Oh, my God ! . . . did she see me ? . . . she'll tell the whole town I was spying ! . . . Oh, this is terrible ! . . . I ought to get Hutchins ! . . . but I can't move while she's watching ! . . .

FIFE (*standing up and looking at the door*). Ada's a long time bringing him . . . there's a lot of whispering in the hall . . . he's afraid, I'm thinking . . . about to enter the presence of Satan . . . I'll have to start in making him think that I'm the devil himself ! . . .

(*Ada comes in the doorway of the sitting-room, left, followed by Reuben, whose face wears an expression of mingled apprehension and bravado.*)

FIFE (*without waiting for an introduction, goes up and shakes Reuben's hand with an exaggerated cordiality*). So you're young Mr. Light, are you ? I'm damned glad to make your acquaintance. Sit down and make yourself at home.

(*All the time he is talking, he stares at Reuben's flustered face, keenly sizing*

DYNAMO

him up. He forces him to sit in the chair across the table from him. Ada sits down at right, watching her father with a challenging smile.)

REUBEN (stammers). Pleased to meet you. Thank you. Thanks.

FIFE (with a sudden change to severity). I want a damned serious talk with you, young man ! That's why I had Ada invite you in ! (As Reuben stares at him bewilderedly.) But before we start that, let me ask you, is your reverend father ever going to take up my challenge to debate with me ?

REUBEN (shamefacedly). I—I don't think so.

FIFE (jeeringly). He's afraid I'd beat him.

REUBEN (defensively). No, he isn't ! He can answer all your arguments easy—with things right out of the Bible ! He's only scared that folks'd think he was wrong to argue with you ! (Then raising his voice defiantly.) But I'd argue with you if I was in his place !

MRS. LIGHT (from her hiding-place by the hedge has caught Reuben's raised voice—with horrified stupefaction). That was Reuben's voice ! . . . he's actually in there talking to that atheist ! . . . Oh, I wish I could get closer the window ! . . . but she'd see me ! . . .

(But she comes around the end of the hedge as far as she can get and strains her ears.)

FIFE (smiling mockingly at Reuben). Well, maybe after you're a minister you and me'll argue it out some time.

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*glad to make a show of his independence before Fife*). I'm not going to be a minister ! Father wants me to, but Mother doesn't—and I don't want to be. Besides, I've never felt the call. You have to feel God calling you to His service.

FIFE (*with a leer*). And how does God call you, tell me ? I'm thinkin' He wouldn't use the telegraph or telephone or radio, for they're contraptions that belong to His arch-enemy, Lucifer, the God of Electricity.

(*Reuben's face has flushed with mingled indignation and fear. He looks up at the ceiling apprehensively, then opens his mouth to make some retort to Fife when there is a vivid flash of lightning. He gives a start and half rises from his chair, controlling an impulse to run from the room. Fife's keen eyes are watching him and he grins with satisfaction.*)

REUBEN (*stammers*). You better not—talk like that, or—you better look out !

FIFE. What's the trouble, young fellow ? Are you afraid of a bit of lightning ? Don't worry about me. The devil looks after his own ! But a minister's son has reason to worry, maybe, when he's in a den of atheism, holding intimate converse with a damned man ! I'm thinking your Jehovah might aim a thunderbolt at me but Lucifer would deflect it on to you—and he's the better electrical expert of the two, being more modern in his methods than your God !

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*in a turmoil of guilt and fright*). I wish I'd never come here ! . . . God may strike him ! . . . He certainly ought to ! . . . if I was God, I'd kill him for blaspheming like that ! . . .

ADA (*observing Reuben—worriedly*). Why did the poor boob let Pop get wise he was scared of lightning. (*Then indignantly*.) Pop has no right to pick on religion ! . . . that's hitting below the belt ! . . .

(*Protestingly*.) Aw, Pop, lay off religion, can't you !

FIFE (*glances at her irritably—then with a calculating tone to Reuben*). Ada's right, Mr. Light. I didn't have you in to convert you to atheism. This is a free country and you're free to believe any God-forsaken lie you like—even the book of Genesis ! (*Then solemnly*.) But here's what I did have you in for, and I'll come right to the point. As a father, I want to know what your intentions are regarding my daughter !

(*Reuben stares at him in open-mouthed amazement.*)

ADA (*embarrassed but cannot help a giggle of amusement when she looks at Reuben*). Aw, Pop, what—

FIFE. Keep your tongue out of this ! (*Sternly, to Reuben*.) I trust you mean honourably by her, young fellow, or it'll be the worse for you ! I'll have no young spark seducing my daughter—getting her with child, maybe, and then deserting her with no marriage lines to save her from disgrace !

DYNAMO

(Ada begins to see this as a huge joke, and she has to bury her face in her hands to choke back her laughter as she looks at Reuben's face, on which is at first a shocked look of stupefaction. But this gives way to a fit of indignation that anyone could think him so low.)

REUBEN. What do you think I am? You have no right to say that about me! I'm not that kind of— (Then his voice booming like his father's with moral self-righteousness.) I respect Ada just as much as I do my mother! I'm going to marry her!

ADA (genuinely flustered—trying to laugh it off). Gee, Rube, did I say you had no nerve? I take it all back!

(Reuben's nerve immediately deserts him. He hangs his head in acute embarrassment, his eyes on the floor.)

MRS. LIGHT (by the end of the hedge). Marry her! . . . I heard it clear as day! . . . respect her like he does me! . . . damn her! . . . Oh, I didn't mean to swear! . . . I don't know what I'm doing! . . . (Then weeping hysterically and trying to stifle it.) Oh, I'll get Hutchins to beat him within an inch of his life! . . . (She sinks down on the ground, her hands over her face.) I've got to stop! . . . she'll hear me up there! . . . she'll tell how I was crying! . . .

MRS. FIFE (has noticed the noise of Mrs. Light's movements and looks down vaguely). Some

DYNAMO

animal's in the garden . . . maybe it's a skunk . . . I'd love to have a skunk-skin coat next winter . . . maybe Ramsay'll give me one for Christmas . . . Ramsay calls the minister a skunk . . . poor Mr. Light ! . . . Ramsay says awful mean things sometimes . . . but it's only because he loves to make jokes . . . he's the kindest man in the world ! . . .

FIFE (*pretending to be sunk in thought, has been staring calculatingly at Reuben—solemnly*). Young man, I'll be honest with you. In view of your honourable intentions I feel bound by my conscience to let you know the secret of the family you're wanting to marry into. But you must give me your word of honour, as man to man—I don't ask you to swear on the Bible—that you'll never repeat what I'm saying to anyone, no matter how dreadful it seems to you ! Will you give me your word ?

REUBEN (*made visibly uneasy, but forcing a manly tone*). Sure. I wouldn't ever say anything.

ADA (*leaning forward in her chair and watching her father worriedly*). What's Pop going to spring ? . . . Rube's looking pale behind the gills, poor guy ! . . . aw, poor nothing ! . . . he ought to have more guts ! . . .

FIFE (*with a tragic sigh*). There's not a living soul knows it, barring my wife and Ada. It's like putting my life in your hands. You know, don't you, that no one knows what I done before I came to this town, nor where I came from. I've good reason for keeping it dark. Listen now.

DYNAMO

Twenty years ago there was a man by the name of Andrew Clark lived in the town of Arming, Ohio— (*He pauses significantly, giving a quick side glance at Ada to see if she's caught the joke.*)

ADA (*a light breaking on her*). Gee, it's that newspaper story ! . . . he's going to pretend he's . . . (*Then indignantly.*) Does he think Rube'd ever do what that skunk did ? . . .

FIFE (*goes on with a guilty furtiveness—lowering his voice*). Now Clark was in love with a girl whose family had got her engaged to another fellow, but she loved Clark and used to meet him in the woods. But this fellow who was engaged to her got suspicious and one night he sneaked up on them lying in each other's arms—in sin, as you'd call it—and he rushed out with a knife at them both, but Clark picked up an axe and split his skull ! (*He finishes up with well-feigned savagery.*) And serve him right, the bloody sneak !

REUBEN (*stares at Fife with horror—stammers weakly*). You mean—Clark murdered him ?

FIFE (*with a great pretence of guilt-stricken protest*). Oh, don't say that ! Not murder ! He killed him in self-defence—when he was crazy with rage and love. Wouldn't you do the same if Ada was the girl and you was Clark ?

REUBEN. What is he asking ? . . . Ada ? . . . would I ? . . . (*Then his horror turning to a confused rage.*) I'd kill Ada if I caught her ! . . . but it was the other man who caught ! . . . and

DYNAMO

they were engaged, too! . . . she belonged to him! . . .

(*Harshly and condemningly—in his father's tone.*) That other fellow should have killed them, that's what I think! That girl was engaged to the other fellow! She had no right to love Clark! That wasn't love, it was lust! She was an adulteress! It would have been only her just punishment if that fellow had killed her! I would have!

FIFE. For the love of God, don't be so hard—for what I was coming to tell you was that I was Clark!

(*As if to punctuate this dramatic confession, there is a flash of lightning, brighter than any that has gone before.*)

REUBEN (*clutches the arms of his chair in superstitious terror, all the passion drained out of him instantly, leaving him weak and penitent.*). Oh, God, please forgive me! . . . I didn't mean it! . . . I wouldn't ever kill her! . . . (Then glancing at Fife with fear.) He's a murderer! . . . he said himself he was damned . . .

FIFE (*eyeing Reuben keenly*). After I'd killed him I gave myself up. The jury said it was murder in the second degree and gave me twenty years—but I fooled 'em with the help of the girl and escaped and we both ran off to the far west and settled down in Niclum, California, and I married her under the name of Fife and we had a daughter. That's Ada.

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*keeping his eyes averted from Ada*). Then that's her mother! . . . she's the daughter of an adulteress! . . . and a murderer! . . . how can I ever trust her? . . . she's gone around with lots of fellows . . . how do I know she never—? . . . (*Then torturedly*.) Oh, God, why did I ever come here to-night? . . .

FIFE (*with a great pretence of uneasiness*). You don't say a word. Well, maybe I shouldn't have told you, because now I've made you an accessory in the murder, for you'll be shielding me unlawfully by keeping silence! And the devil knows what sin you'll think it in the sight of God!

(*The clap of thunder from the preceding flash comes with a great rumble*.)

REUBEN (*filled with fear*). Accessory! . . . the police can arrest me! . . . (*Then summoning his manhood*.) But I won't tell them! . . . ever! . . . I gave my word! . . . (*Then conscience-stricken*.) But God! . . . I'll be guilty before God! . . . but He knows I gave my word! . . . but does that count with Him? . . . when I didn't swear on the Bible? . . . (*Then frantically*.) But He knows I love Ada! . . . He wouldn't want me to tell on her father . . .

(*He suddenly jumps up and mumbles to Fife*.) I won't tell the police, you needn't worry.

ADA (*with a triumphant glance at her father*). Good for you, Rube!

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*avoiding her eyes*). I've got to go home now.

FIFE (*searching Reuben's face—insistently*). I'm sorry to put such a load on your conscience, Mr. Light, but I felt it was only right of me.

REUBEN. Why does he rub it in? . . . God, I hate him! . . . I wish they'd hanged him! . . .

(*Angrily—his voice booming denouncingly like his father's.*) You needn't be afraid I'll tell—but you ought to go and tell yourself! You know you're guilty in the sight of God! Do you want to burn for ever in hell?

FIFE (*tauntingly*). Your hell and God mean no more to me than old women's nonsense when they're scared of the dark!

REUBEN (*threateningly*). Don't you dare talk like that! I won't stand for it—not now! If you don't stop your blaspheming, I'll—I mean, it'd serve you right if I— (*Hurrying toward the door as if in flight.*) I got to get home. (*He stops at the door and turns to Ada, but keeps his eyes averted.*) Good night, Ada. (*He goes out.*)

ADA. He was threatening Pop already he'd tell on him! . . . Gee, he is yellow all right! . . . (*Tears of mortification and genuine hurt come to her eyes—she brushes them back.*) Aw, what do I care about him? . . .

FIFE (*with a chuckle*). He'll be blabbin' my dreadful secret to his old man yet, wait and see!

DYNAMO

ADA (*to his surprise, turns on him angrily*). It wasn't fair ! He never had a chance !

(*She flings herself on the chaise longue and begins to cry.*)

FIFE (*stares at her in astonishment*). Are you turning against me—for that lump ! (*Then he comes and pats her on the shoulder.*) I was only doing it for your sake, Ada. You ought to see him in his true colours so you'd not be thinking too much about him.

ADA (*forces back her tears and jumps up*). I didn't think anything ! Leave me alone about him, can't you ? (*With a great pretence of indifference she gets a book from the table and sits down again.*) I should worry about that poor fish ! I've got to study my algebra.

(*Her father stares at her puzzledly. There is a bright flash of lightning and Light, sitting as before in the sitting-room of the other house reading the Bible, jumps nervously to his feet.*)

LIGHT. I ought to conquer that silly fear in myself . . . the lightning is God's will . . . what on earth can Amelia be doing with Reuben all this time ? . . . (*He listens for a moment—uneasily.*) I'll go upstairs to them . . . she should be more considerate than to leave me alone when . . .

(*He walks toward the door on right.*)

DYNAMO

(There is a pause of darkness here to mark the end of SCENE THREE. In this darkness the clap of thunder from the preceding flash comes. No time elapses between Scenes Three and Four.)

SCENE FOUR

SCENE. When the light comes on again—but this time very dimly, as if the moon were behind clouds—the walls of the Fife and Light sitting-rooms have been replaced, while the interior of Reuben's bedroom is now revealed.

Mrs. Fife still leans out of her bedroom window and Mrs. Light sits crouching by the hedge.

MRS. LIGHT (suddenly jumping to her feet and peering up through the leaves at Mrs. Fife). Oh God, isn't she ever going in? . . . I'll scream in a minute! . . .

MRS. FIFE. I love to watch lightning . . . the thunder clouds are getting nearer the moon . . . I'd like to be a cloud . . . it must be nice to float in the wind . . . but it must be getting bed-time . . .

(She slowly backs herself into her room.)

MRS. LIGHT (as Mrs. Fife disappears). Now I can get Hutchins . . .

(She slinks back along the hedge and then quickly across the lawn around the corner of her house just as Reuben enters from the left by the Fife house.)

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*stands hesitating—uneasily*). I thought I'd walk around and think up some lie . . . Mother'll guess something's wrong as soon as she looks at me . . . but I'm not going to stay out in the storm . . . (*He walks slowly over to where he had stood with Ada—dully.*) Here's where she kissed me . . . why couldn't we have gone for a walk ? . . . she'd have let me kiss her, . . . I'd have had her in my arms . . . like her mother was with Clark ? . . . no, I didn't mean that ! . . . I didn't mean sin ! . . . (*Then with desperate bravado.*) Aw, what is sin, anyway ? . . . maybe that's just old women's nonsense, like Fife says ! . . . why should I have a guilty conscience ? . . . it's God's fault ! . . . why hasn't He done something to Fife ? . . . I should think He'd have to punish adultery and murder . . . if there is any God . . . (*There is a great flash of lightning and he stands paralysed with superstitious terror.*) It comes every time ! . . . when I deny ! . . . (*More and more obsessed by a feeling of guilt, of being a condemned sinner alone in the threatening night.*) Fife's damned me with him ! . . . there's no use praying ! . . . it's getting black ! . . . I'm afraid of God ! . . .

(*There is a crash of thunder. He cowers, trembling—then cries like a frightened little boy.*) Mother ! Mother !

(*He runs off right, forgetting that he has sneaked out by the back, making for the front door. At the same moment Light can be dimly made out as he enters Reuben's bedroom, and Fife sticks his*

DYNAMO

head out of his sitting-room window and looks toward the Light home.)

FIFE. That was him I heard passing . . . I'll wait here and watch the fun . . . (*He chuckles to himself.*)

LIGHT (*pauses just inside the door in alarm at finding the room dark and empty—calls uneasily.*) Amelia ! Reuben !

(*He lights a match with trembling fingers and hurries over to the lamp and lights it. His wife's voice comes excitedly from the hall-way, calling.*)

MRS. LIGHT. Hutchins !

LIGHT (*hurries to the door, meeting her as she comes in.*) Amelia ! Thank God !

MRS. LIGHT (*excitedly, her words pouring out.*) Oh, Hutchins, something awful has happened—that Fife girl—I heard Reuben asking Fife if he could marry her !

(*Light, completely stunned, stares at her blankly. There is the noise of the front door being slammed and Reuben's voice calling desperately.*)

REUBEN. Mother ! Where are you ?

MRS. LIGHT. Sssh ! Let him come up here. (*Pushing him toward the closet in rear.*) You hide in that closet and listen ! I'll make him acknowledge everything ! He'd only lie to you ! (*Vindictively.*) I promise I won't stand between

DYNAMO

him and punishment this time ! (She gives him a final shove inside the door and closes it.)

REUBEN (*his voice comes from the hall as he rushes upstairs*). Mother ! (A second later he runs in and, too distracted to notice her expression, throws his arms around her.) Mother ! (He breaks down and sobs.)

MRS. LIGHT (*alarmed by the state he is in, puts her arms around him, her immediate reaction one of maternal tenderness. She leads him front and sits on the side of the bed*). There, there ! It's all right, Reuben ! Mother's here ! (Then indignantly.) What have those awful people been doing to my boy to get him in such a state ? (As he gives a start—sharply.) Now don't deny you were there ! Don't make matters worse by lying ! What happened between you and that man ? Tell Mother !

REUBEN (*brokenly*). I can't ! I promised him I wouldn't. I can't tell anyone !

MRS. LIGHT (*changing to a tone of wheedling affection*). Yes, you can, Reuben. You can always tell Mother everything. You always have.

REUBEN (*clinging to her*). I love Mother better'n anything in the world . . . she always forgives me . . . I wish I could tell her . . . she'd know what was right . . .

(*There is a bright flash of lightning. He shrinks closer to her and blurts out*) I'm scared, Mother ! I'm guilty ! I'm damned.

DYNAMO

MRS. LIGHT (*startled*). Guilty? . . . does he mean he? . . . (*With sudden strong revulsion*.) And to think he's had those same arms hugging that little filthpot this very evening! . . .

(*She pushes him away, but, holding his shoulders, stares down into his face.*) Do you mean to say you refuse to tell your own mother, just because you were forced into promising not to by that atheist? Then all I can say is that my boy I thought I could trust has turned into a liar and a sneak, and I don't wonder you feel guilty in God's sight!

(*As she finishes speaking, the roll of the thunder from the preceding flash comes crashing and rumbling. Reuben sinks down on his knees beside her, hiding his face in her lap.*)

REUBEN (*stammers*). I'll tell you, Mother—if you promise to keep it a secret—just between me and you—and never tell Father.

MRS. LIGHT. All right. I'll promise I won't tell your father.

- REUBEN (*made uneasy by something in her tone—insistently*). You'll swear it on the Bible?

MRS. LIGHT. Yes, I'll swear on the Bible I won't tell him.

REUBEN (*in a passion of eagerness to get the guilty tale off his conscience*). His name isn't even Fife, it's Clark! He changed it because he'd murdered a man out in Ohio where he used to live. He got twenty years but he escaped and ran away

DYNAMO

to California ! Fife's a murderer, that's what he really is !

(While he has been telling this story, the closet door has opened and Light stands there, listening greedily. In his hand is a belt of Reuben's.)

LIGHT (*thinking with a fierce, revengeful joy.*)
Lord God of Righteous Vengeance, I thank Thee ! . . . at last Thou strikest ! . . .

MRS. LIGHT (*dumbfounded, not knowing what to make of this strange tale—and disappointed that it is not a confession about Ada*). Wherever did you get hold of this story ?

REUBEN. He told me himself !

MRS. LIGHT. Do you expect me to believe Fife's such an idiot as to confess such things to you ?

REUBEN. He had a good reason to tell me ! I asked him if I could marry Ada and he thought he was honour bound to tell me ! He knew it'd be safe with me when I gave him my word——

(Then thinking with guilty shame.) But I've told ! . . . I've just told ! . . . why did I ? . . . Oh, how Ada would hate me if she knew ! . . .

(Pleadingly.) Remember you swore on the Bible you'd never tell ! Remember, Mother !

MRS. LIGHT (*still gripping him, glaring into his face vindictively*). So you want to marry that little harlot, do you ?

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*shakes her hands off his shoulders—shrinking back from her, still on his knees*). Don't you say that, Mother? I love Ada, Mother! I love her with all my heart!

MRS. LIGHT (*calls over her shoulder*). Do you hear that, Hutchins?

LIGHT (*grimly*). Yes, I hear. (*He takes a threatening step forward.*)

REUBEN. Father!

(*Then his eyes turn to his mother's vindictive face and he thinks in a tortured agony of spirit.*) He was hiding in the closet! . . . she knew it! . . . she cheated me! . . . when I trusted her! . . . when I loved her better than anyone in the world! . . .

(*He cries out in a passion of reproach.*) Oh Mother! Mother!

MRS. LIGHT (*misunderstanding this as a plea*). No, you needn't think I'm going to get you off this time! You punish him good, Hutchins! The very idea—kissing that dirty little ——!

REUBEN. Don't you say that!

LIGHT (*walks toward him*). Hold your tongue! How dare you address your mother——! (*Reuben cowers into the left corner front, his eyes fixed on the belt his father has in his hand.*) Get down on your knees!

REUBEN (*obeys mechanically, his thoughts whirling in his head*). Belt . . . Mother's face . . . she

DYNAMO

looks terrible . . . she wants him to beat me . . . she wants to hear me yell . . . (*Then with a defiant determination as if some hidden strength in him had suddenly been tapped.*) But I won't give her the satisfaction! . . . no matter how it hurts! . . .

LIGHT. Let this put back the fear of God into your sinful heart, Reuben!

(*He brings the belt down heavily across Reuben's back. Reuben quivers, but not a sound comes from his lips. At the same moment there is a glaring flash of lightning and Light cringes back with a frightened exclamation.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*has winced when Reuben was hit —conscience-strickenly*). That must have hurt dreadfully! . . . poor Reuben! . . . (*Then with an exasperated sense of frustration, gazing at Reuben's set face.*) Why doesn't he cry? . . . if he'd cry I'd stop Hutchins . . . that girl has changed him! . . .

REUBEN (*expecting the next blow, thinking with a grim elation*). Come on! . . . hit again! . . . hit a million times! . . . you can't make me show her you hurt me! . . . (*Then stealing a glance up at his father's face.*) He looks scared! . . . it was that lightning! . . . I'll never be scared of lightning again! . . . (*Then resolutely.*) I'll be damned if I'm going to let him beat me! . . .

(*He jumps to his feet and faces his father defiantly, with hatred in his eyes.*)

DYNAMO

LIGHT (*guiltily*). I can't bear him looking at me like that! . . . I really ought to feel grateful to him . . . his folly has delivered Fife into my hands . . .

(*He throws the belt on the bed—to his wife.*) Reuben's punishment can wait. I have my duty of denouncing that murderer to the proper authorities. (*Triumphantly.*) Haven't I always said, if the truth were known, that man was a criminal! (*Turning toward the door.*) Keep Reuben here. He might warn Fife. I'll lock this door after me. (*Then hurriedly, as a crash of thunder comes.*) I must hurry. I want to get to the police station before the rain. (*He shuts the door behind him and locks it.*)

REUBEN (*staring after him with the same fixed look of hate—calls jeeringly.*). Look out for the lightning! (*Then he turns to his mother with a sneer—contemptuously.*) Picture my being scared of that boob all my life! What did you ever see in him, to marry him? He's yellow!

MRS. LIGHT (*frightened by the change in him, but attempting a bullying tone.*). How dare you talk so disrespectfully—!

REUBEN. But you're yellow, too. And I'm yellow. How could I help being? It's in my blood. (*Harshly.*) But I'll get him out of my blood, by God! And I'll get you out, too!

MRS. LIGHT (*pitiably now*). What have I done, Reuben?

REUBEN (*bitterly*). You knew she was in that closet ! You led me on to tell ! I thought you loved me better'n anyone, and you'd never squeal on me to him ! (*He starts to break down miserably.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*goes to him as if to take him in her arms*). I do love you better than anyone, Reuben ! I didn't mean——

REUBEN (*steps back from her—accusingly*). And you called Ada a harlot—after I told you I loved her with all my heart. (*Then a note of pleading in his voice.*) Do you mean you didn't mean that part of it—about her ?

MRS. LIGHT (*immediately furious again*). Yes, I did mean it about her ! I meant it and a lot more !

REUBEN. Then I'm through with you ! And as for him——!

(*He suddenly is reminded of something—thinking wildly.*) He went ! . . . police station ! . . . that'll finish me with Ada ! . . . (*There is the noise of the front door slamming.*) There's the front door ! . . . he's leaving ! . . .

(*He rushes to the door but finds it locked—pushes and pulls at it, trying to force it open.*)

MRS. LIGHT. I suppose you want to run over and warn your fine friends ! Fife'll be in a cell before long, please God, and if there was any real justice his girl'd be put in along with him, for she's no better than a street-walker !

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*glares at her now*). I'm glad you're talking like that ! It shows you up and I can hate you now !

MRS. LIGHT (*breaking down*). Reuben ! For God's sake, don't say that—to your mother !

REUBEN. You're not my mother any more ! I'll do without a mother rather than have your kind !

(*He turns from her to the window and looks out. As he does so, his father appears from right, coming from the front door. He is buttoned up to the neck in an old raincoat and carries an umbrella.*)

FIFE (*still leaning out of his sitting-room window, catches sight of Light—calls excitedly over his shoulder*). Here's the old man now ! Come quick, Ada ! (*A moment later, just as Light comes up, she appears at the window next to her father. Her face is set in an ugly, sneering expression. Fife calls to Light in a mocking tone.*) Good evening, Your Holiness.

LIGHT (*stops short and stares at Fife with a rage that chokes him so that for a moment his lips move, forming words, but he can't utter them—finally finding his voice, he stammers*). You—you murderer !

FIFE (*nudging Ada—with a great pretence of guilt*). Murderer ? In the name of God, has your son ? —after he'd sworn his word of honour——!

LIGHT (*triumphantly*). You thought you had him caught in your snares, did you ?—but God

DYNAMO

was simply using Reuben to bring retribution on your head. (*In a booming triumph.*) "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

REUBEN (*watching from his window*). He's talking to Fife! . . . he's telling! . . .

(*Then cursing his father aloud.*) God damn him! I'll show him! (*He drives back at the door with the weight of his whole body, and it crashes open and he stumbles over it and disappears in the hall.*)

MRS. LIGHT (*starts after him, calling frightenedly*). Reuben! Don't! Reuben!

FIFE (*enjoying himself hugely*). You wouldn't give me up to the police, would you?—a kind-hearted Shepherd of the Lord like you!

ADA (*suddenly flares up into a temper*). Aw, cut it out, Pop! This has gone far enough! (*To Light with sneering contempt.*) No wonder your son is a sap! Can't you see this is only a joke on you? Why, you poor fish, that murder story is in to-day's *Star*—the name Clark and everything! Pop simply copied that story—and if you go to the police you'll only be making a boob of yourself—but go ahead if you like!

(*As she speaks Reuben runs in from the right. He advances threateningly on his father, who is staring at Ada stupidly, overwhelmed by the conviction that what she has told him is true.*)

REUBEN. Did you tell——?

DYNAMO

ADA. Look who's here ! I was just telling your old man it was only a murder story out of the paper Pop told you to prove you were yellow ! And you are, all right ! Don't you ever dare speak to me again ! You're a yellow rat ! (*She breaks down, weeping, and rushes back into the room.*)

FIFE (*following her*). Ada ! Don't waste crying over——

REUBEN. Ada ! Listen ! I didn't mean—I didn't know——!

(*He takes a few steps toward the window, then stops, thinking bitterly.*) So it was all a lie . . . a joke she played on me ! . . . that's why she made me meet her old man ! . . . so she could make a fool of me ! . . .

(*He yells at the window.*) It's you who're the rat, Ada ! You can go to hell !

MRS. LIGHT (*hurrying in from the right. She runs to him and tries to put her arms around him*). Reuben !

REUBEN (*pushing her away from him—furiously*). Leave me alone ! You're to blame for this ! You cheated me ! I hate you !

MRS. LIGHT. For God's sake, Reuben !

LIGHT (*comes out of the state of humiliated stupefaction into which the knowledge of the joke has thrown him—bursting into a fatuous rage—to his wife*). As if I have not had enough to bear of humiliation ! (*He points a shaking finger at Reuben.*)

DYNAMO

This dunce—this stupid dolt—now I shall be the butt of all their sneers ! And to think I stayed my hand— ! But wait ! I'll show him what a real whipping is !

REUBEN (*fiercely*). You lie ! You'll never dare touch me again, you old fool ! I'm not scared of you any more !

(*There is a blinding flash of lightning. Light, his nerves already at the breaking point, gives a gasp of superstitious fright and backs away from his son.*)

LIGHT. God have mercy !

REUBEN (*with a sneer*). What God ? Fife's God ? Electricity ? Are you praying to It for mercy ? It can't hear you ! It doesn't give a damn about you ! (*There is a tremendous crash of thunder. Reuben looks up and gives a wild laugh as though the thunder elated him. His mother and father shrink back from him in abject terror as he shouts up at the sky.*) Shoot away, Old Bozo ! I'm not scared of You !

MRS. LIGHT. Reuben ! You don't know what you're saying !

REUBEN (*with a hard mocking laugh—to his mother*). What's the matter ? Do you still believe in his fool God ? I'll show you. (*He jumps to his father's side and grabs his raincoat by the lapel—addressing the sky with insulting insolence.*) If there is his God let Him strike me dead this

DYNAMO

second ! I dare Him ! (*His father squeals with terror and tries to break away from his hold. His mother screams. He laughs triumphantly.*) There ! Didn't I tell you ! (*Light finally tears his coat from Reuben's grip and runs panic-stricken off right, dragging his moaning wife by the arm. Reuben turns his back on his home determinedly and starts walking off left—with bitter defiance.*) There is no God ! No God but Electricity ! I'll never be scared again ! I'm through with the lot of you !

(*As he disappears off left, the sound of wind and rain sweeping down on the town from the hills is heard.*)

CURTAIN

A C T T W O

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *The same act as Act One. The interior of the Light sitting-room is revealed.*

It is an early morning of a hot day in August. Fifteen months have elapsed.

Mrs. Fife is leaning out of one of the windows of their sitting-room, basking contentedly in the sun. She wears a faded blue wrapper.

MRS. FIFE (*thinking with a sleepy content*). The sun is hot . . . I feel so dozy . . . I know why dogs love to lie in the sun . . . and cats and chickens . . . they forget to think they're living . . . they're just alive . . . (*She looks toward the Light house—with drowsy melancholy.*) Alive . . . poor Mrs. Light is dead . . . what is death like, I wonder ? . . . I suppose I'll have to die some time . . . I don't want to die before Ramsay . . . he wouldn't know how to take care of himself. . . .

(*At a noise in the room behind her she half turns her head—then Ada leans out of the window next to her mother. Her face has a peaked look. Her manner is touchy and irritable and she has lost her former air of self-assured flippancy. There is no rouge on her face and she is dressed as if she had grown indifferent about her personal appearance.*)

DYNAMO

ADA. For heaven's sake, what're you dope-dreaming about now, Mom?

MRS. FIFE. I was thinking of poor Mrs. Light—

ADA. Poor nothing! She hated us worse than poison! She'd have sung hymns of joy if any of us had cashed in! And why feel sorry for her, anyway? She's lucky, if you ask me! Life is the bunk!

MRS. FIFE (*looks at her worriedly—with a sigh*). I wish that Light boy would come back.

ADA (*immediately flying into a temper*). For God's sake, shut up! I've told you a million times how dumb that talk is and yet you keep on harping—!

MRS. FIFE. All right, Ada. I won't say anything.

ADA. What do I care about that poor fish! He can be dead for all I care! (*Then, as Fife's voice is heard calling from somewhere in the house*.) There's Pop howling his head off about something. You go in and smooth him down, Mom. I'm sick of his gourches.

MRS. FIFE (*as she turns to go*). I wish you'd make it up with your Pop, Ada. He feels so bad about it. You've kept a grudge against him ever since the night that Light boy—

ADA. There you go again! For Pete's sake, leave me alone!

DYNAMO

(*Mrs. Fife disappears meekly without another word. Ada stares before her, thinking resentfully.*) I've got a good right to have a grudge against him . . . what he did that night wasn't on the level . . . it isn't a question of Rube . . . I don't give a darn about him . . . then why are you all the time thinking about him? . . . I'm not! . . . I liked him but that was all . . . and he was yellow, wasn't he? . . . well, maybe you'd be worse if everything was framed against you the way Pop got him! . . . poor Rube! . . . what's he been doing all this time, I wonder? . . . (*With a sad smile of scorn for herself.*) You poor boob! . . . it must be love! . . .

(*In the sitting-room of the Light home, Hutchins Light enters from the rear, right. The grief over his wife's death has made him an old man. His hair has turned almost white, his mouth droops forlornly, his eyes are dull, his whole face is a mask of stricken loneliness. He comes and sits in his old chair and mechanically picks up his Bible from the table but lets it drop again and stares before him.*)

LIGHT (*thinking dully*). Another day . . . empty . . . all days are empty now . . . how long, O Lord? . . . (*He sighs heavily.*) No sleep again last night except for a few minutes . . . and then nightmare . . . I dreamed Amelia was in my arms . . . and Reuben came and beckoned her and she went away with him . . . (*He shudders, flinging off the memory—then wonders*)

DYNAMO

ing bitterly.) Does that dream mean Reuben is dead, too ? . . . what does it matter ? . . . ever since that night he has been dead for me . . . but he never gave Amelia a chance to forget him . . . a postal card every month or so . . . each with the same blasphemy . . . "We have electrocuted your God. Don't be a fool !" . . . her last words ! . . . "don't be a fool," she kept saying to me . . . she couldn't have known what she was saying . . .

(He breaks down, sobbing, and buries his head in his arms on the table.)

MRS. FIFE (*reappears in the window beside Ada. She is smiling with a doting good-nature*). Your Pop told me to get out of the room and stop looking at him or he'd start breaking plates. My, but he's in a breakfast temper, though ! The men at the plant'll catch it—but they don't mind him. They know, like I do, that he's really the kindest man in the world.

ADA (*resentfully*). Oh, is he ? I suppose that's why he acted the way he did to Rube !

MRS. FIFE. He couldn't help being mean then. He'd be mean at first to any man he thought you cared for—especially a minister's son. But he'd get over it, you'd see. He'd like to see you happy, before everything. I'm sure he's been wishing for a long time that Light boy'd come home so he could make friends with him.

ADA. Aw, you're crazy, Mom ! (*Suddenly she leans over and kisses her mother affectionately*) It's you who are the kindest in the world. (*Then*

DYNAMO

embarrassed—irritably.) Gosh, this sun's hot ! I don't see how you stand it. (*She retreats into the house.*)

MRS. FIFE (*blinking placidly in the sun*). It was awful nice the way Ada kissed me . . . I wish she'd get to kissing her Pop again that way . . . she does it now as if she wished she was a mosquito with a stinger . . . the screen up in her room has a hole rusted in it . . . I must remember to get it fixed or they'll be flying in keeping her awake . . .

(*A pause—then Reuben Light comes slowly in from the left and stands there, his eyes fixed for a while on his home, taking in every detail. He does not for a moment notice Mrs. Fife, nor she him. A great change has come over him; he is hardly recognizable as the Reuben of Act One. Nearly nineteen now, his body has filled out, his skin is tanned and weather-beaten. In contrast to his diffident timid attitude of before, his manner is now consciously hard-boiled. The look on his face emphasizes the change in him. It is much older than his years, and it is apparent that he has not grown its defensive callousness without a desperate struggle to kill the shrinking boy in him. But it is in his eyes that the greatest change has come. Their soft grey-blue has become chilled and frozen, and yet they burn in their*

DYNAMO

depths with a queer devouring intensity. He is dressed roughly in battered shoes, dungaree trousers faded by many washings, a blue flannel shirt open at the neck, with a dirty coloured handkerchief knotted about his throat, and wears the coat of his old suit. Under his arm he carries six books, bound together with a strap.)

REUBEN (*thinking jeeringly*). Home, Sweet Home! . . . the Prodigal returns! . . . what for? . . . I felt a sudden hunch I had to come . . . to have a talk with mother, anyway . . . well, I'll soon know what it's all about . . . and won't the old man be glad to see me! . . . yes! . . . he'll poison the fatted calf! . . .

(*He laughs aloud. Mrs. Fife turns and gives a startled exclamation as she recognizes him. He turns and looks at her for a moment—then with a swaggering impudence.*) Fine day, isn't it?

MRS. FIFE (*her eyes mooning at him, with a simple pleased smile*). I'm glad you've come home. Ada'll be glad. (*She stirs as if to go into the house.*) I'll tell her you're here.

REUBEN (*frowning*). No. I've got no time for her now. (*Then with a peculiar air of indifferent curiosity*.) Are you dead sure Ada'll be glad I'm back? I shouldn't think she would after what happened.

MRS. FIFE. That wasn't her doing. She's been sorry about it ever since.

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*with the same detached interest*). She called me a yellow rat—and she had the right dope. I sure was dumb when it came to guessing what she really wanted or I would have—(*With a cold smile.*) Well, never mind what—but you can tell her I've changed. I've lived a lot and read a lot to find out for myself what's really what—and I've found out all right ! You can tell her I've read up on love in biology, and I know what it is now, and I've proved it with more than one female.

MRS. FIFE (*preoccupied with her own thoughts*). It was just one of Ramsay's jokes.

REUBEN. He's a great little joker ! And I certainly fell for it. Well, there's no hard feelings. He did me a favour. He woke me up. (*With a laugh, a queer expression coming into his eyes.*) You can tell him I've joined his church. The only God I believe in now is electricity.

MRS. FIFE (*simply*). Ramsay'll be glad.

REUBEN (*indicating the books he carries*). I'm studying a lot of science. Sometimes I've gone without eating to buy books—and often I've read all night—books on astronomy and biology and physics and chemistry and evolution. It all comes down to electricity in the end. What the fool preachers call God is in electricity somewhere. (*He breaks off—then strangely.*) Did you ever watch dynamos ? What I mean is in them—somehow.

DYNAMO

MRS. FIFE (*dreamily*). I love dynamos. I could watch them for ever. I love to hear them sing. They're singing all the time about everything in the world !

(*She hums her imitation of a dynamo's metallic purr.*)

REUBEN (*startled—looks at her with growing interest*). "Singing all the time about everything in the world" . . . listen to her . . . she's caught the sound . . . she really makes you think of a dynamo, somehow . . . she's big and warm like . . . like what? . . . damned if she doesn't remind me of mother the way she used to be . . . way back when I was a little kid and didn't know what she was really like . . . (*With a bitter grin.*) Wouldn't mother go wild if I told her that! . . . maybe I will just to get her goat! . . .

(*Abruptly he puts down his books and walks up to Mrs. Fife.*) Say, you're all right!

(*He takes one of her hands in his clumsily—then lets go of it, grinning awkwardly.*)

MRS. FIFE (*sentimentally touched—beaming on him*). I always knew you must be a nice boy. (*With a coquettish, incongruously girlish air.*) But you save your holding hands for Ada! (*Then she half turns around at some sound in the room behind her—in a hurried whisper to Reuben.*) She's coming! You hide behind those bushes and we'll surprise her!

(*Mechanically, reacting instinctively for a moment as the timid boy of formerly, he*

DYNAMO

runs to the gap in the lilac bushes and hides in the old place. Ada appears in the window beside her mother. Her face wears an expression of eager expectation. Her eyes glance quickly on all sides as if searching for some one.)

ADA (*flusteredly*). I'm sure I heard some one . . . it sounded like . . .

REUBEN (*almost as soon as he reaches his old hiding-place is overcome by shame*). What'd I do that for? . . . hide! . . . the old stuff! . . . (*Savagely*.) No, by God! . . . her mother put it in my head . . . but I'll soon show Ada! . . . She'll find out if I'm yellow now! . . .

(With a swagger and the cold smile of his lips he walks through the gap just as Mrs. Fife speaks to Ada.)

MRS. FIFE (*with a teasing smile*). Ada, I've got a big surprise for you. Guess— (*But Ada has already seen him.*)

ADA. Rube!

REUBEN (*walks toward her, the smile frozen on his lips, his eyes fixed on hers*). Go right up and kiss her! . . . look at the way she's looking at you! . . . she's easy now! . . .

ADA (*staring at him, stammers his name again in a tone in which there is now a note of panic*). Rube!

REUBEN (*pulls her head down and kisses her, keeping his lips on hers while she struggles instinctively for*

DYNAMO

a moment, until she gives up and returns his kiss—then he pushes her a little away from him and laughs quietly, his confidence in himself completely restored). Well, this prodigal gets the fatted kiss even if “there ain’t no calf.” Hello, Ada ! How’s every little thing ?

MRS. FIFE (*sentimentally*). That’s right. You two kiss and make up. I’ll leave you alone. (*She goes back into the room.*)

ADA (*is staring at him with eyes that search his face apprehensively*). Rube ! You—you’ve changed. I—I hardly know you ! I shouldn’t have kissed you—like that. I don’t know why I—

REUBEN. Well, I know. (*He takes her face between his hands again and brings his close to it.*) Because you love me. Isn’t that right ? (*As she hesitates—insistently, giving her head a little shake.*) Isn’t it ?

ADA (*helplessly*). I guess it is, Rube.

REUBEN. Guess, nothing ! You loved me before I went away—even when you were bawling me out for a yellow rat. That was what made you so mad, wasn’t it ? You were ashamed of loving me when I was so dumb and didn’t get what you wanted and was so damned scared to touch you. (*He laughs—a self-assured insinuating laugh that for her has something at once fascinating and frightening about it.*) But you needn’t worry any more, Ada. I’ve learned a lot about love since I left—and I get you now, all right ! (*Then*

DYNAMO

with a sudden burst of threatening assertiveness.) You're damned right, I've changed ! I'm not yellow about you or God or anything else ! Don't forget that, Ada ! (Then as suddenly changing to a passionate tone of desire.) Gosh, you're pretty ! I'd forgotten how pretty you were ! You make all the girls I've been playing around with look like mistakes ! Your eyes are grand—and your hair—and your mouth—! (He kisses them hungrily as he speaks—then controls himself and breaks away from her, forcing a laugh.) Continued in our next ! Let's take a walk tonight.

ADA (staring at him helplessly). Yes—no—I don't think—

REUBEN. Sure you will. We'll walk out to the top of Long Hill. That's where I was all during the storm that night after I left here. I made myself stand there and watch the lightning. After that storm was over I'd changed, believe me ! I knew nothing could ever scare me again—and a whole lot of me was dead and a new lot started living. And that's the right place for us to love—on top of that hill—close to the sky—driven to love by what makes the earth go round—by what drives the stars through space ! Did you ever think that all life comes down to electricity in the end, Ada ? Did you ever watch dynamos ? (She stares at him, frightened and fascinated, and shakes her head.) I've watched them for hours. Sometimes I'd go in a plant and

DYNAMO

get talking to the guys just to hang around, and I tried everywhere to get a job in a plant but never had any luck. But every job I've had—I never stuck to one long, I wanted to keep moving and see everything—every job was connected with electricity some way. I've worked for electricians, I've gone out helping linesmen, I shovelled sand on a big water-power job out West. (*Then with sudden eagerness.*) Say, Ada, I've just had a hunch ! I know now what drove me back here, all right ! You've got to get your old man to give me a job in his plant—any job, I don't care what !

ADA. Sure—I'll try, Rube.

REUBEN (*with a cold assurance*). You've got to, Ada. Because I can't stay on here without a job. I'm broke and I won't live home—even if the old gent would let me. And that reminds me, I better go and pay my little visit. I don't want to see him, but I want to have a talk with Mother. I've got over my hard feelings about her. She was so crazy jealous of you she didn't care what she did. I can make allowances for her—now. So I'll be friends again if she wants to—and then you watch me convert her over from that old God stuff of his ! (*He grins with resentful anticipation.*)

ADA (*has listened with blank astonishment—pitifully*). Then you don't—? Why, I thought—Didn't they send for you ?

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*unsuspectingly—with a grin*). Send for me to come home and be good? I never gave them my address, kid. I didn't want them bothering me. I never wrote, except some post-cards to mother I sent to get her goat—and his. (*Then picking up his books and turning toward his home.*) Guess I'll go round by the back. I don't want to run into him unless I have to. So long, Ada. Tell your old man I'd sure like that job!

(*He walks to the hedge and then, stealthily, across the lawn and disappears behind the house.*)

ADA (*looking after him*). He doesn't know she's dead . . . ought I to have told him? . . . oh, I couldn't! . . . poor Rube! . . . (*Then admiringly.*) How strong he's got! . . . but it makes me afraid too . . . his eyes seemed to take all the clothes off me . . . and I didn't feel ashamed . . . I felt glad! . . . (*Defiantly.*) I love him! . . . I want him as much as he wants me! . . . what of it? . . . (*Then with a shudder she cannot repress.*) But his eyes are so queer . . . like lumps of ice with fire inside them . . . and he never said he loved me . . . aw, of course he does! . . . he was nuts about me before he went away, wasn't he? . . . (*Determinedly.*) I've got to make Pop give him that job or he might beat it again . . . he owes it to Rube to do something for him . . . I'll talk to him right now . . .

(*She disappears inside the house just as Reuben slowly opens the door of the Light sitting-room. There is an ex-*

DYNAMO

pression of puzzled uneasiness on his face as he peers around the half-opened door, then slinks in as if he were a burglar. Light is still sitting, his face hidden in his arms on the table, in an attitude of exhausted grief. Reuben does not at first see him.)

REUBEN. Something's all wrong here . . . where the hell is every one? . . . where's mother? . . . (*He has stepped on tiptoe into the room and now suddenly he sees his father and a sneering smile immediately comes to his lips.*) There he is, anyway . . . praying as usual . . . the poor boob . . . there isn't a damn prayer ever got him a thing . . . Mother used to make him pray for electric lights in the house . . . (*Suddenly with a pleased grin.*) That's a good hunch . . . I'll get them put in the first money I save . . . it'll be like bringing my gospel to the heathen . . . let there be electric light! . . . (*He chuckles, then bends closer to look at his father.*) He must be asleep . . . that's one on him to catch him . . .

(*He speaks with mocking geniality.*) Hello! (*His father gives a frightened start, as if dodging a blow, and stares at his son's face with stupefied bewilderment.*) Sorry to disturb your little snooze. (*His father continues to look at him, as if he can't believe his eyes.*) Oh, this is me, all right. (*Then the fact of his father's changed appearance strikes him for the first time, and he blurts out in a tone that is almost kindly.*) Say, you look all in. What's the trouble? Been sick?

DYNAMO

LIGHT (*thinking gropingly*). It's Reuben . . . Reuben . . . but he doesn't seem like Reuben . . .

REUBEN (*misunderstanding his father's silence as intentional, immediately becomes resentful*). What's the matter? Don't you want to talk to me? Well, I'm not here to talk to you either. I was just passing this way and thought I'd drop in to say hello to Mother. Where is she?

LIGHT (*thinking more clearly now—an unstrung fury rising within him*). Oh, yes, it's Reuben! . . . I recognize him now! . . . the same as that night . . . cruel and evil! . . . and now he's asking for the mother he . . . my poor Amelia! . . . he killed her! . . .

(*He lurches to his feet and leans against the back of his chair weakly, glaring at his son. Violently—in a voice that is like a croak.*) Murderer! You killed her!

REUBEN (*stares at him with a stunned look*). What the hell do you mean? (*Then harshly, taking a threatening step forward*.) Where's Mother, I'm asking you!

LIGHT (*his strength failing him—in a faltering tone hardly above a whisper*). She's dead—Reuben.

REUBEN (*terribly shaken*). You're a liar! You're just saying that to get my goat!

LIGHT (*going on as if he hadn't heard—in a tone of monotonous grief*). You can't see her—I can't—never—never see her again!

DYNAMO

(He breaks down abjectly, sinking on his chair and sobbing, his face in his hands.)

REUBEN (*stands looking at him stupidly, convinced now of the truth and trying to make himself realize it and accept it*). Then it's straight goods . . . she is dead . . . gone . . . no use making a fuss . . . let him cry . . . why can't his religion buck him up now? . . . he ought to feel sure he's going to see her again soon . . . in heaven . . . I'd like to see her again . . . tell her I'm sorry for acting so rough to her that night . . . (*He gulps and his lips twitch*.) I wish he'd stop crying . . .

(*He goes forward and pats his father on the back gingerly*.) Buck up.

(*His father doesn't seem to hear him. He turns and slumps into the chair at the far side of the table*.) Why couldn't I have seen her just once again . . . this is a rotten break . . .

(*He asks mechanically*.) How long ago did she die?

LIGHT (*mechanically in his turn—without lifting his head*). Two weeks ago yesterday.

REUBEN. Two weeks . . . it was about then I first felt that hunch to come home and see her . . . that's damn queer! . . . (*He stares at his father—uneasily*.) He said I killed her . . . what the hell did he mean? . . .

(*Forcing a casual tone*.) What did she die of?

LIGHT (*dully*). Pneumonia.

REUBEN (*heaving a sigh of relief*). Sure . . . I knew he was only saying that to get my goat . . .

DYNAMO

(*He speaks to his father in a defensive, accusing tone.*) Pneumonia, eh ? Well, it's a damn wonder we didn't all die of it years ago, living in this dump ! Ever since I can remember the cellar's leaked like a sieve. You never could afford to get it fixed right. Mother was always after you about it. And I can remember the ceiling in my room. Every storm the water'd begin to drip down and Mother'd put the wash basin on the floor to catch it. It was always damp in this house. Mother was always after you to make them put in a decent furnace instead of—

LIGHT (*has lifted his head and is glaring at his son*). Are you trying to say I killed her ? It was you ! She'd been pining away for almost a year. Her heart was broken because you'd gone ! She hoped for a time you'd come back but finally she gave up hoping—and gave up wanting to live ! And your horrible blasphemous postcards kept coming ! She blamed herself for your ruin and she wrote long letters begging your forgiveness, and asking you to come home ! But you'd never given her an address ! She couldn't mail them, she knew you'd never read them, and that broke her heart most of all ! You killed her as surely as if you'd given her poison, you unnatural accursed son !

REUBEN (*deeply disturbed but trying desperately to conceal it*). I never gave her my address because I thought she'd only write bawling me out.

DYNAMO

(Then harshly.) Where are those letters she wrote? They're mine!

LIGHT (*with a mean satisfaction*). I destroyed them! I burnt them to the last scrap!

REUBEN (*starts for his father threateningly, his fists clenched*). You rotten son of a — (*He chokes it back—then helplessly, with a wounded look.*) Say, that was a dirty trick! I'd like to have read—

(*Light averts his eyes and suddenly hides his face in his hands.*)

LIGHT (*remorsefully now*). He's right . . . I had no right . . . no right even to read them . . . how I wish I'd never read them! . . .

(*Lifting his head*.) I destroyed them in a fit of anger. When I read them I realized that Amelia had been thinking of you all the time. And I felt betrayed! I hated her and you! I was insane with hatred! God forgive me!

REUBEN (*after a pause—dully*). Did she ever talk about me?

LIGHT (*immediately jealous again*). She never mentioned your name! (*Then forcing himself to say it*.) I—I had forbidden her to.

REUBEN (*his face lights up with anger again, but he controls it*). Sure, you had to, didn't you?—so what the hell? (*Then insistently*.) But—didn't she?—at the last?—when she was dying?—say anything?

DYNAMO

LIGHT (*fighting a furious battle with himself*). Have I got to tell him? . . . that she'd even forgotten God! . . . that her last words were his words! . . . even her soul lost to me! . . . must I tell this? . . . (*Savagely.*) No! . . . I don't owe him the truth! . . . I must make him feel he is accursed! . . .

(*He springs from his chair and leaning across the table, points his finger at Reuben denouncingly.*) Yes, with her last breath she cursed you for all the ruin and suffering you had brought on her—and on me! (*Then as he sees Reuben shrinking back in his chair, a haunted look of horror on his face, the consciousness of the evil of the lie he is telling overwhelms him with guilty remorse. He stammers.*) No!—that's a lie, Reuben!—a terrible lie!—don't listen—don't believe me! (*He stumbles hastily around the table to the dazed Reuben and with a pitiful gesture puts a trembling hand on his head—pleadingly.*) Forgive me, Reuben! You are my son as well as hers, remember. I haven't the strength to resist evil. I wanted to punish you. She didn't curse you. Her last words were the very words you had written her. "Don't be a fool!" she kept saying to me! (*He shudders.*)

REUBEN (*springs from his chair in extreme agitation and grabbing his father by both shoulders, stares hungrily in his face.*) What? What's that? Mother said that?

LIGHT (*seeming to shrivel up in his son's grip—*

DYNAMO

trying unconvincingly to reassure himself). She was delirious. She must have been delirious.

REUBEN (*lets go of his father. The old man turns and stumbles back to his chair. Reuben stares before him, thinking excitedly*). "We have electrocuted your God. Don't be a fool" . . . that's what I kept writing her . . . her last words! . . . then I'd converted her away from his God! . . . the dying see things beyond . . . she saw I'd found the right path to the truth! . . . (*His eyes shine with a new elation.*) By God, I'll go on now all right! . . . (*He laughs aloud to himself exultantly.*)

LIGHT. For the love of God!

REUBEN (*immediately ashamed of himself*). I wasn't laughing at you, honest! (*Then suddenly.*) Say, I think I'll go and visit Mother's grave. There's some things I'd like to get off my chest—even if she can't hear me. (*Turning to the door.*) Well, so long.

LIGHT (*dully*). Shall I have your room put in order for you?

REUBEN (*frowning*). No. It isn't my room now. That me is dead.

(*Then an idea comes to him—thinking.*) But maybe Mother'd want me to . . . maybe I'd get some message from her if I stayed here . . .

(*Then casually to his father.*) Oh, all right. I'll stay for a couple of days. After that I'm going to get a room out near the plant. Say, I might as well

DYNAMO

break the bad news to you. I'm getting a job in Fife's power house. (*Then quickly.*) I suppose you think I'm doing it to spite you, but I'm not.

LIGHT (*dully*). You have sold your soul to Satan, Reuben.

REUBEN (*immediately resentful—with his cold smile*). Your Satan is dead. We electrocuted him along with your God. Electricity is God now. And we've got to learn to know God, haven't we? Well, that's what I'm after! (*In a lighter tone—mockingly.*) Did you ever watch dynamos? Come down to the plant and I'll convert you! (*He cannot restrain a parting shot.*) I converted Mother, didn't I? Well, so long.

(*He goes out and a moment later walks past the front of the house from the right. He is off guard and the callousness has gone from his face, which is now very like that of the boy of ACT ONE.*) I wish she hadn't died! . . . but she forgave me . . .

ADA (*sticks her head out of their sitting-room window as he passes the lilac hedge. Her face is flushed with excitement, happy and pretty now. She calls*). It's all right, Rube. Pop's got a job for you. A floor man is leaving Saturday.

REUBEN (*startled out of his thoughts, at first frowns then forces the cold smile to his lips*). That's great.

ADA (*coquettishly*). Well, don't I get anything?

REUBEN (*with his cold smile*). Sure!

(*He goes to her and reaches up as if to kiss her—then checks himself, thinking remorsefully.*) What

DYNAMO

the hell am I doing? . . . I'm going out to Mother's grave . . . she hated her . . .

(*He steps back, frowning.*) Wait till later, Ada. Well, so long. See you to-night. (*He turns his back on her abruptly and walks off left.*)

CURTAIN.

SCENE TWO

SCENE. *The same except that Reuben's bedroom is now revealed while the wall of the sitting-room has been replaced. It is about half-past eleven on the same night—a sultry, hazy sky with few stars visible. There is no light in either house.*

Reuben and Ada come in from the left. She is hanging on his arm, pressing close to him as if she were afraid of his leaving her, glancing up into his face with a timid look of mingled happiness and apprehension.

Reuben's face shows that he also is struggling with conflicting emotions. There is a fixed smile of triumph and gratified vanity on his lips, but his eyes are restless and there is a nervous uneasiness apparent in his whole manner.

ADA. You're sure you don't hate me now—because I let you—maybe I shouldn't have—but, oh, Rube, I do love you so much! Say you love me just as much—that you always will!

REUBEN (*preoccupiedly*). Sure I will.

ADA (*pleadingly*). Put your arms around me

DYNAMO

tight and kiss me again. Then I won't be scared—or sorry.

REUBEN (*mechanically puts his arms around her and kisses her at first perfunctorily, then with reawakening passion*). Gee, you're pretty, Ada! You've certainly got me going!

ADA (*happily now*). Oh Rube, when you kiss me like that nothing in the world matters but you! Up on the hill when we—oh, I felt I was just you, a part of you and you were part of me! I forgot everything!

REUBEN (*suddenly moves away from her and stares around him nervously—in a strange voice*). Sure. You forget everything for a minute. You're happy. Then something has to wake you up—and start you thinking again.

ADA. What is it you're thinking about? Tell me, and maybe I can help you forget it.

REUBEN (*shaking his head*). I can't forget. (*Then determinedly*) And I don't want to. I want to face things. I won't ever be satisfied now until I've found the truth about everything:

ADA (*trying to force a joking tone*). And where do I come in?

REUBEN (*coldly*). You don't come in.

ADA. Rube! Don't say that—not after—You scare me!

REUBEN (*irritably*). Cut out that talk of being scared! What are you scared about? Scared

DYNAMO

what we did was a sin? You're the hell of an atheist! (*Then jeeringly.*) And you're the one that used to be always kidding me about being a goody boy! There's nothing to be scared about or sorry for. What we did was just plain sex—an act of nature—and that's all there is to it!

ADA (*pitifully—her voice trembling*). Is that all—it means to you?

REUBEN. That's all it means to anyone! What people call love is just sex—and there's no sin about it!

ADA. I wasn't saying there was, was I? I've proved to you I don't—only— (*Then frightenedly.*) It's you, Rube. I can't get used to you, talking like that. You've changed so.

REUBEN (*with a coarse grin*). Well, you've got no kick coming. If I'd stayed the same poor boob I used to be you might have died an old maid.

ADA. But—you wanted to marry me then, Rube.

REUBEN (*roughly*). And a lot that got me, didn't it?

ADA (*faintly*). Don't you want to—any more?

REUBEN. Don't I what? Talk sense, Ada! We're married by Nature now. We don't need any old fool of a minister saying prayers over us! (*Then after a moment's pause—with a forced laugh.*) Say, here's one on me, Ada—speaking of praying. It was out at Mother's grave. Before I thought,

I started to do a prayer act—and then suddenly it hit me that there was nothing to pray to. (*He forces another laugh.*) It just goes to show you what a hold that bunk gets on you when you've had it crammed down your throat from the time you were born ! You can't pray to electricity unless you're foolish in the head, can you ? (*Then strangely.*) But maybe you could, at that—if you knew how !

ADA. Is that where you went this afternoon—out to her grave ?

REUBEN (*with affected indifference*). Sure. What of it ?

ADA (*pityingly*). Poor Rube !

REUBEN (*frowning*). Poor nothing ! She's dead, and that's all there is about it ! You've got to face death as well as life.

ADA. I'm sorry she hated me so. I hope now she forgives us—for loving each other.

REUBEN (*with his cold smile*). You mean forgives us for what we did to-night ? You don't know her ! She never would ! But what's the use of talking about it ? Who gives a damn ? Good night, Ada. I'm tired. I'm going to bed. See you to-morrow. (*He turns his back on her abruptly and walks off right toward the front door of his house.*)

ADA (*stands looking after him with bewildered hurt for a moment, then turns back toward her own front door and begins to cry softly, at the same time trying*

DYNAMO

to reassure herself). I mustn't . . . feel bad . . . he doesn't mean to hurt me . . . he's changed, that's all . . .

(She disappears off left. A moment later, Reuben appears in his bedroom and lights the lamp. He sits down on the bed and stares before him.)

REUBEN (*looking about the room now, thinking bitterly*). The last time I was here . . . there's the closet where she hid him . . . here's where she sat lying to me . . . watching him beat me . . . (*He springs to his feet—viciously.*) I'm glad she's dead ! . . . (*Then immediately remorseful.*) No . . . I don't mean that, Mother . . . I was thinking of how you acted that night . . . I wish I could have seen you after you'd changed . . . after you'd come back to my side . . . (*He goes to the window on the left and looks out.*) Here's where I was looking out, waiting for Ada to signal on the Victrola . . . gosh, that seems a million years ago ! . . . how scared I was of even kissing her ! . . . and to-night she was dead easy . . . like rolling off a log ! . . . (*He comes back to the bed and sits down.*) Mother said she was no better than a street-walker . . . she certainly didn't put up a fight . . . marry her ! . . . what does she think I am, a boob ? . . . she put one over on me and now I've put one over on her ! . . . we're square . . . and whatever's going to happen, will happen, but it won't be a wedding ! . . . (*Then with coarse sensuality.*) But it's grand to have her around handy whenever I want . . . the flesh, as the old man would call it ! . . . and she's all right

other ways, too . . . I like her . . . she got me the job . . . she'll be useful . . . and I'll treat her decent . . . maybe it's love . . . whatever the hell love is ! . . . did Mother really love the old man ? . . . she must have or how could she stand him ? . . . and she made me with him . . . act of Nature . . . like me and Ada . . . (*He jumps to his feet distractedly.*) God, that seems lousy somehow ! . . . I don't want to think of it !

. . . (*He paces up and down—then pauses and appears to be listening for something.*) There's something queer about this dump now ! . . . as if no one was living here . . . I suppose that's because Mother's gone . . . I'd like to reach her somehow . . . no one knows what happens after death . . . even science doesn't . . . there may be some kind of hereafter . . . I used to kneel down here and say my prayers . . . she taught them to me . . . then she'd tuck me in, even after I'd grown up . . . and kiss me good-night . . . (*As if automatically he slips to his knees by the bed.*) I'm sorry, Mother . . . sorry you're dead . . . I wish I could talk to you . . . (*He scrambles to his feet—angry at himself*) You damn fool ! . . . what's come over you anyway ? . . . what are you praying to ? . . . when there's nothing . . . (*Then strangely.*) Funny, that hunch I got when I was talking to Ada . . . about praying to electricity, if you knew how . . . it was like a message . . . Mother believed what I believed when she died . . . maybe it came from her . . . (*Then suspicious of himself again.*) Aw, that's just superstitious junk . . . but why is it ? . . . look at how mysterious all this electrical wave stuff is in radio and everything . . . that's scientific fact

DYNAMO

. . . and why couldn't something like that that no one understands yet? . . . between the dead and the living? . . . (*He walks around nervously*) No use trying to go to sleep . . . and I want to keep on thinking . . . but not in here . . . I'll go for a walk . . . why not go down to the plant? . . . take a look in at the dynamos . . . watching them always helps me somehow . . . sure, that's the stuff! . . .

(*He turns down the light and blows it out and can be seen going through the door in rear.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE THREE

SCENE. *A half-hour later. Exterior of the Light and Power Company's hydro-electric plant about two miles from the town. The building is red brick. The section on the left, the dynamo room, is much wider than the right section, but is a story less in height. An immense window and a big sliding door are in the lower part of the dynamo room wall, and there is a similar window in the upper part of the section on right. Through the window and the open door of the dynamo room, which is brilliantly lighted by a row of powerful bulbs in white globes set in brackets along both walls, there is a clear view of a dynamo, huge and black, with something of a massive female idol about it, the exciter set on the main structure like a head with blank oblong eyes above a gross rounded torso.*

Through the upper window of the right section of the building, in the switch galleries, by a dim light, one gets a glimpse of the mathematically-ordered web of the disconnecting switches, double busses, and other equipment stretching up through the roof to the outgoing feeders leading to the transmission towers.

The air is full of sound, a soft overtone of rushing water from the dam and the river bed below, penetrated dominantly by the harsh, throaty, metallic purr of the dynamo.

Reuben comes in from the right and approaches until he is opposite the open doorway. He stands there staring at the dynamo and listening to it.

REUBEN (*after a pause—fascinatedly*). It's so mysterious . . . and grand . . . God, I love dynamos ! . . . they make you feel things . . . you don't need to think . . . you almost get the secret . . . what electricity is . . . what life is . . . what God is . . . it's all the same thing . . . (*A pause—then he goes on in the same fascinated tone.*) It's like a great dark idol . . . like the old stone statues of gods people prayed to . . . only it's living and they were dead . . . that part on top is like a head . . . with eyes that see you without seeing you . . . and below it is like a body . . . not a man's . . . round like a woman's . . . as if it had breasts . . . but not like a girl . . . not like Ada . . . no, like a woman . . . like her mother . . . or mine . . . a great, dark mother ! . . . that's what the dynamo is ! . . . that's what life is ! . . . (*He*

DYNAMO

stares at it raptly now.) Listen to her singing . . . that beats all organs in church . . . it's the hymn of electricity . . . "always singing about everything in the world" . . . if you could only get back into that . . . know what it means . . . then you'd know the real God! . . . (Then longingly.) There must be some way! . . . there must be something in her song that'd tell you if you had ears to hear! . . . some way that she'd teach you to know . . . (He begins to hum, swaying his body—then stops when he can't catch the right tone.) No, you can't get it! . . . it's as far off as the sky and yet it's all around you! . . . in you! . . . (Excitedly.) I feel like praying now! . . . I feel there is something in her to pray to! . . . something that'll answer me! . . . (He looks around him and moves to the right out of the square of light from the open doorway.) Supposing anyone saw me . . . they'd think I was nutty . . . that old prayer stuff . . . (Then arguing tormentedly with himself.) But I feel it's right . . . I feel Mother wants me to . . . it's the least I can do for her . . . to say a prayer . . . (He gets down on his knees and prays aloud to the dynamo.) Oh Mother of Life, my mother is dead, she has passed back into you, tell her to forgive me, and to help me find your truth! (He pauses on his knees for a moment, then gets slowly to his feet. There is a look of calm and relief on his face now. He thinks reverentially.) Yes, that did it . . . I feel I'm forgiven . . . Mother will help . . . I can sleep . . . I'll go home . . . (He walks slowly off right.)

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

SCENE. *Same as ACT TWO, SCENE THREE—Exterior of the power house four months later. It is a little after sunset and the equipment on the roof is outlined blackly against a darkening crimson sky.*

The door of the dynamo room is shut but the interior is brilliantly lighted and the dynamo can be partly seen through the window. There is a dim light above in the switch galleries as in the previous scene. The overtone of rushing water from the dam sounds louder because of the closed door which muffles the noise of the dynamo to a minor strain.

Reuben enters from the left accompanied by Mrs. Fife. He has grown very thin, his dungarees sag about his angular frame. His face is gaunt and pale. His eyes are deeply sunken. He is talking with unnatural excitement as they come in. Mrs. Fife is unchanged. If anything, her moony dreaminess is more pronounced. She listens to Reuben with a fascinated far-away look, as if the sound of his voice hypnotized her rather than the meaning of the words.

REUBEN (*insistently*) You understood all I explained to you up on the dam, didn't you?—about how life first came out of the sea?

MRS. FIFE (*nods dreamily*). Yes, Reuben. It sounds like poetry—"life out of the sea."

REUBEN. It is like poetry. Her song in there

DYNAMO

—Dynamo's—isn't that the greatest poem of all—the poem of eternal life? And listen to the water rushing over the dam! Like music! It's as if that sound was cool water washing over my hot body! Like some one singing me to sleep—my mother—when I was a kid—calling me back to somewhere far off where I'd been once long ago and known peace! (*He sighs with longing, his body suddenly gone limp and weary.*)

MRS. FIFE (*dreamily*). That's awful pretty, Reuben. (*She puts her arm around him—sentimentally.*) I'll be your mother—yours and Ada's. I've always wanted a boy.

REUBEN (*leans against her gratefully, his head almost on her shoulder, his eyes half closed*). Yes. You're like her—Dynamo—the Great Mother—big and warm— (*With a sudden renewal of his unnatural excitement, breaks away from her.*) But I've got to finish telling you all I've come to know about her—how all things end up in her! Did I tell you that our blood-plasm is the same right now as the sea was when life came out of it? We've got the sea in our blood still! It's what makes our hearts live! And it's the sea rising up in clouds, falling on the earth in rain, made that river that drives the turbines that drive Dynamo! The sea makes her heart beat too!—but the sea is only hydrogen and oxygen and minerals, and they're only atoms, and atoms are only protons and electrons—even our blood and the sea are only electricity in the end! And think of the

DYNAMO

stars ! Driving through space, round and round, just like the electrons in the atom ! But there must be a centre around which all this moves, mustn't there ? There is in everything else ! And that centre must be the Great Mother of Eternal Life, Electricity, and Dynamo is her Divine Image on earth ! Her power houses are the new churches ! She wants us to realize the secret dwells in her ! She wants some one man to love her purely and when she finds him worthy she will love him and tell him the secret of truth and he will become the new saviour who will bring happiness and peace to men ! And I'm going to be that saviour—the miracle will happen to-night—that's why I asked you to come—I want you to be a witness ! I know it will be to-night because I had a message from my mother last night. I woke up and saw her standing beside my bed—just as she used to when she came in to kiss me good-night—and she smiled and held out her arms to me. She came from the spirit of the Great Mother to tell me she had at last found me worthy of her love.

MRS. FIFE (*sentimentally*). Most people don't believe in ghosts. Ramsay doesn't. But I see them all the time. Sometimes I don't hardly know which are ghosts and which are real. Has she come many times, Reuben ?

REUBEN (*strangely*). Not lately—not since I gave up seeing Ada. Before that she used to come almost every night to warn me.

DYNAMO

MRS. FIFE. Warn you about what, Reuben ?

REUBEN. That I was living in sin—that Dynamo would never find me worthy of her secret until I'd given up the flesh and purified myself ! (*Then proudly.*) And I found the strength to do it. It was hard ! I was beginning to really love Ada.

MRS. FIFE (*simply*). Of course, you love Ada—and you shouldn't act so mean to her, Reuben. You haven't been around in a month or more. She's making herself sick worrying.

REUBEN (*intensely*). I'd like to see her ! I'd love to ! But I can't ! Don't you understand I can't—that my finding the secret is more important than—but when I come back bringing peace and happiness to the world it will mean peace and happiness for Ada and me too ! Everything will be all right then !

(*Then thinking with sudden fear and doubt.*) But supposing the miracle doesn't happen to-night ? . . . have I got to go on and on like this ? . . . Ada keeps coming to me every night in dreams . . . the temptation of her body . . . I've beaten myself with my belt till the pain drove it off . . . but I can't keep on much longer . . .

(*He sways dizzily on his feet, passing his hand over his eyes—then straightens himself and turns to Mrs. Fife.*) I've got to go in. They'll be missing me. You'll stay around, won't you ? (*He*

DYNAMO

(goes to the door.) You wait until your husband's gone home. Then you come in.

MRS. FIFE. All right, Reuben.

(Reuben slides back the dynamo room door and enters, closing it behind him. Mrs. Fife stares after him mooningly. A moment later the door from the dynamo room is opened again and Fife comes out, closing it behind him. He hasn't changed since his last appearance. He starts to walk hesitatingly off right—then stops without looking around him and does not notice his wife.)

FIFE (*thinking exasperatedly*). That damned Rube! . . . there's a queer look in those cold eyes of his lately! . . . by God, I'd fire him tonight if Ada wouldn't make my life a hell for it! . . . but he does his work good . . . too damned good! . . . he's always pawing around a dynamo when he's no business . . .

MRS. FIFE. Hello, Ramsay. You better get home to supper. I had mine early. I had to go out.

FIFE (*turns on her with an irritated start*). Oh, you did, did you? You're always having to go out these days, it seems! (*Mrs. Fife stares at him as if she didn't hear him. This drives Fife into a shrill scolding.*) I won't have you gallivanting down here at all hours and staring at the dynamos

DYNAMO

and humming like a half-wit ! What the hell's come over you anyway ? (*He finishes up lamely, the wind taken out of his sails by her indifference.*)

MRS. FIFE. Nothing's come over me, Ramsay. I was talking to Reuben. He took me up on the dam and told me about how we all used to live in the ocean once. (*Then in her tone of childish mooning.*) D'you suppose I ever was a fish, Ramsay ?

FIFE. Aye, a jellyfish, I'm thinking ! You've the brains for that ! (*Then angrily.*) You do too much gabbing with that Rube ! He'll addle the little sense you've left ! But if you've got to talk to him, make him talk turkey and say when is he planning to marry Ada ! Aren't you her mother, and don't you see she's worrying her heart out ? (*Lowering his voice.*) D'you think it's happened between them—you know what I mean ?

MRS. FIFE (*with naive simplicity*). Yes, of course it has, Ramsay. She loves him the same as I did you when we—

FIFE. Don't be comparing him to me ! I was more of a decent man than he ever will be ! (*In a passion.*) I'll have a talk with that lad and if he don't do the decent thing by her, I'll beat decency into him ! (*He turns from her in a tantrum.*) To hell with you ! I'm hungry ! I'm going home ! (*He goes off right.*)

(Mrs. Fife looks after him with a placid smile—then she gives the big door a push that slides it open to its full width and steps inside and, as she sees Reuben, stops as she is about to pull the door closed again. He is kneeling just inside the doorway before the dynamo in the foreground, his arms stretched out to it supplicatingly.)

REUBEN (*suddenly cries out with a note of despair*). Mother ! Don't you hear me ? Can't you give me some sign ? O Dynamo, who gives life to all things, hear my prayer ! Grant me the miracle of your love !

(He waits, his body strained with suspense, listening as if he expected the dynamo to answer him. Ada comes from around the corner of the building at the left. Her manner is furtive as if she were doing something she is ashamed of. She looks worried and run down, although she has made a defiant effort with rouge and mascara to hide this.)

ADA. He must be around some place . . .
(She moves cautiously to the window and peeks in, but cannot see him. Then with bitter self-contempt.)
 Here I am chasing after him ! . . . but I couldn't stand it any more, waiting . . . oh, what a damn fool I was to give in so easy ! . . . no wonder he's sick of me ! . . . but he can't throw me over this way ! . . .

DYNAMO

REUBEN (*his tense, supplicating attitude suddenly relaxing dejectedly*). She won't answer me . . . there must still be something I've got to do. (*Then guiltily.*) Maybe she feels I haven't killed all desire for Ada yet . . . that I ought to face her and conquer the flesh once for all . . .

(*He jumps to his feet and turns to Mrs. Fife pleadingly.*) Can't you tell me? You know what she means sometimes. (*He lowers his voice cautiously as if he didn't want the dynamo to overhear.*) Do you think it's something I've got to do about Ada?

MRS. FIFE (*simply*). Yes, you've got to do the right thing by Ada, Reuben.

REUBEN (*thinking with unnatural excitement*). Then that is it! . . . well, I'll go and face Ada right now!

(*Turning to Mrs. Fife.*) You stay here! I'll be back. (*He comes out, sliding the door closed after him.*)

ADA (*calls to him uncertainly*). Rube!

REUBEN (*whirls around and stands staring at her with strange fixity for a moment, his thoughts jumping at conclusions*). It's Ada! . . . Dynamo knew Ada was here! . . . she wanted me to come out and prove! . . .

ADA (*frightenedly*). What's the matter? Don't look at me like that, Rube!

REUBEN (*moved in spite of himself, instinctively takes a step toward her—in a queer detached tone*).

I didn't mean to scare you, Ada. You gave me a start, seeing you all of a sudden.

ADA (*looking at him hopefully*). You're not sore at me for coming, are you?

REUBEN. No. It's as if you'd been sent. Didn't you feel something driving you to come here right now?

ADA (*quickly*). Yes, I just had to come!

REUBEN (*strangely*). It was she who made you come.

ADA. She? Who's she?

REUBEN (*a lightning change comes over his face. He takes a threatening step toward her—denouncingly, his voice booming like his father's*). You blasphemous fool, you! Do you dare to deny her! “The fool saith in his heart—” (*He suddenly checks himself and forces a strange, shame-faced laugh.*) Say, did you get me quoting from the Bible, Ada? That's one on me! That comes from arguing with the old man lately. He's got some fool notion that Dynamo is the devil! (*Then his expression abruptly changing again—fiercely.*) But I'll make the old fool get down on his knees to her yet before I'm through with him! And I'll make you, too, Ada!

(*This puts a sudden idea into his head—thinking excitedly.*) What made me say that? . . . you, Mother? . . . make her pray to you? . . . not only conquer her flesh, but convert her? . . .

DYNAMO

Listen to me, Ada ! To-night the miracle will happen !—and then there will be only the kingdom of happiness on earth—my kingdom !—for us, Ada ! (*Then suddenly grabbing her by the arm.*) Only you've got to help me !

ADA (*thinking frightenedly*). For God's sake, what's come over him ! . . . the damned dynamo ! . . . it's driving him crazy ! . . .

(*She puts her arms around him pityingly and tries to hug him to her.*) I'll do anything, Rube ! Don't you know how much I love you ?

REUBEN (*pushing her away from him—in a stammering panic*). Don't do that ! (*Then pleadingly*.) Why can't you understand ? You've got to believe in Dynamo, and bow down to her will ?

ADA (*soothingly*). All right, Rube.

REUBEN (*taking her hand—insistently*). Come with me ! I want to explain everything to you—all this plant means about her—you've got to believe, Ada ! (*She follows him off left, frightened but pitying and resolved to humour him. His voice is heard explaining excitedly as they climb the path to the dam.* It recedes and then grows louder as they cross from the dam to the dynamo-room roof. A moment later he is seen there. He comes forward until he stands by the coping, front. He still has Ada by the hand. *She follows him, holding back as much as she dares, a nervous look on her face. His unnatural excitement has increased, he looks around*

him with the rapt expression of one in a trance, his eyes burning feverishly.) Oh, Ada, you simply can't help believing in her ! You only have to listen to her ! Her song is the hymn of eternal generation, the song of eternal life !

ADA (*uneasily*). Rube ! I'm scared up here !

REUBEN (*turns and looks at her like a sleep-walker for a second—then with a sudden hungry passion*). You're so damned pretty ! God, how I wish the miracle was over and we could—— !

ADA (*persuasively*). I'm scared on this roof, Rube. Let's go down !

REUBEN (*excitedly*). Yes, down to her ! I was forgetting her ! She's waiting for me !

(Then as she starts to go back the way they have come, he takes her hand again and pulls her through the door from the roof to the galleries.)

ADA (*frightenedly*). Rube ! I don't want to go——

(He slams the door behind them.)

(There is a pause of darkness here to indicate the end of SCENE ONE. No time elapses between SCENES ONE and TWO.)

DYNAMO

SCENE TWO

SCENE. When the light comes on again the interiors of the upper and lower switch galleries are revealed. The lower gallery of the oil switches is a deep but narrow compartment with red brick walls. The oil switches, with their spindly steel legs, their square criss-crossed steel bodies (the containers inside looking like bellies), their six cupped arms stretching upward, remind one of Hindu idols tortured into scientific supplications. These switches extend in a straight row backward down the middle of the gallery, but in the dim light of one bulb in a bracket in the left wall only the front one in the foreground can be made out. Against the wall on the right is a stairway that extends backwards half-way up this wall, then turns and ascends diagonally upwards to the left to the upper gallery, and from thence up to the door to the roof of the dynamo room.

The upper gallery contains the disconnecting switches and the double busses. It is of double width and extends over the switchboard room also. This second gallery, dimly lighted like the one below, is a fretwork of wires, steel work, insulators, busses, switches, etc., stretching upward to the roof. Below the disconnecting switches is a raised platform.

Reuben and Ada are discovered by the dim light of this upper gallery standing just inside

DYNAMO

the door to the dynamo-room roof at the top of the stairway.

ADA (*looking around her frightenedly at the weird-shaped shadows of the equipment writhing upward in the dimly lighted gallery—shrinking close to Reuben, who is staring at all this with a rapt, questioning, listening look*). All this stuff scares me. I've only seen it in daylight before. It looks so weird—as if it was alive !

REUBEN (*strangely*). You're beginning to see, Ada ! It is alive ! Alive with the mighty spirit of her eternal life ! (*Then with a start, he pushes her away from him roughly*.) What the hell are you doing ? Don't press against me, I tell you ! I'm wise to your dirty game—and I won't stand for it ! Don't you realize we're in her temple now !

ADA (*pityfully*). Rube ! Please don't talk like that—when you know how I love you !

REUBEN (*clutching her arm fiercely*). You mustn't say you love me in here, you fool, you ! Don't you know all this is watching—listening—that she knows everything ! Sssh ! I want to hear if she's angry at me ! (*He stands in a strained attitude of attention, listening to the dynamo's hum sounding from below—then evidently satisfied, turns to Ada with a relieved air*.) No, she isn't angry on account of you being here because she knows you're beginning to believe in her ! It's all right for you to come close to me, Ada. (*He puts an arm around her and pulls her to him*.)

DYNAMO

ADA (*persuasively*). Please let's go down, Rube.

REUBEN (*gently*). All right, Ada. (*They go down the first flight of steps. He stops as they get to the bottom and glances up and around him.*) You know, Ada, there used to be times when I was scared here too—when all these switches and busses and wires seemed like the arms of a devil fish—stretching out to suck me in— (*He gives a shudder and presses her to him.*)

ADA (*soothingly*). You mustn't be afraid. I'm here with you.

REUBEN (*pleadingly—pointing to the platform beneath the disconnecting switches*). Listen, Ada ! I want you to pray to her—up there where I pray sometimes—under her arms—with your arms like her arms, stretching out for me ! (*He suddenly bends his face to her face, his eyes devouring it desirously.*) God, you're pretty ! (*He controls himself with a violent effort and pushes her away from him, keeping his face averted from hers—in a voice that is almost supplicating.*) You must pray that she may find me worthy. You must pray for me, if you love me !

ADA (*soothingly—humouring him*). All right, Rube. (*She goes up the stairs to the platform and stands directly under the switches.*)

REUBEN (*remains standing below—thinking confusedly*). Mother would warn me if I was doing

wrong . . . Dynamo means all this to happen to me . . . it's the great temptation . . . perhaps she wants me even to kiss Ada . . .

(*He ascends to the platform and stands holding on to the rail, afraid to look at Ada.*)

ADA (*stretching her arms up, in the same position as the switch arms—tenderly and soothingly*). Why did you say a minute ago, if I loved you ? Don't you know I do ? Why have you stayed away from me so long, Rube ? I've almost died, longing for you !

REUBEN (*without looking at her—dazedly*). You believe in her now, don't you ? You wouldn't do anything to make me unworthy in her sight, would you ?—when it means happiness for me—and for all mankind ? You couldn't, could you ?

ADA (*humouring him—gently*). Of course not.

REUBEN (*mechanically*). You swear to her ?

ADA (*in the same tone*). Yes, I swear.

REUBEN (*mechanically*). Then I'm going to . kiss you, Ada—just once—only kiss you—she wants me to—as a final test—to prove I'm purified— (*He looks up at her now and lurches forward with a groan of passion and takes her in his arms.*) Ada !

(*He kisses her frantically, bending her backward and down toward the floor of the platform. She cries out frightenedly.*)

DYNAMO

(There is a pause of darkness to indicate the end of SCENE TWO. A short time is supposed to elapse between SCENES TWO and THREE.)

SCENE THREE

SCENE. As the light slowly comes on again, Reuben is heard sobbing brokenly from the gallery. The interiors of the dynamo and switchboard rooms are now also revealed.

The dynamo room is high and wide with red brick walls and a row of great windows in the left wall. The floor and an observation balcony which projects into the dynamo room from the switchboard room on the right (one story up), are of concrete. The nearest dynamo, which we have seen previously through the doorway, occupies most of the floor space in the foreground. A steel ladder runs up its side on the right to a platform around the exciter.

The switchboard room is a small compartment to the right of the dynamo room, one story up in the other section of the building. In it are the switchboard and a couple of chairs. It is lighted by a shaded drop light over the desk. Jennings, the operator on duty, a man of thirty or so, is seated at the desk.

Mrs. Fife is sitting in the dynamo room just under and to the left of the observation balcony. She is staring dreamily at the front dynamo,

humming to herself, her big body relaxed as if she had given herself up completely to the spell of its hypnotic, metallic purr which flows insistently through the ears, numbing the brain, charging the nerves with electricity, making the heart strain with the desire to beat in its rhythm of unbroken, eternal continuity.

In the gallery, Ada and Reuben are still on the platform beneath the disconnecting switches. Reuben is on his knees, his back bowed, his face covered by his hands. Ada is standing before him, directly beneath the switches as before. She is bending over him in a tender attitude, one hand reaching down, the fingers touching his hair.

REUBEN (*thinking torturedly*). Mother! . . . I've betrayed you . . . you will never bless me with the miracle now! . . . you have shut me from your heart for ever! . . .

(*He groans and beats his head against the floor.*)

ADA (*puts her hand down and pats him on the back consolingly*). Poor Rube! Why do you think about things so much? I love you. Why don't you be happy?

REUBEN (*shrinking away*). Don't touch me—ever again!

(*He springs to his feet, and shielding his face with one hand from the sight of her, runs down the stairs to the lower oil switch gallery. He stops there, look-*

DYNAMO

ing around him distractedly as if he didn't know where to hide, his thoughts hounded by remorse.) Mother! . . . have mercy on me! . . . I hate her now! . . . as much as you hate her! . . . give me one more chance! . . . what can I do to get you to forgive me? . . . tell me! . . . yes! . . . I hear you, Mother! . . . and then you'll forgive me? . . . and I can come to you? . . . (A terrible look of murder comes on his face. He starts for the stairs, his hands outstretched as if he were already strangling her—then stops.) No . . . not with my hands . . . never touch her flesh again . . . how? . . . I see . . . switchboard room . . . in the desk. . . .

(He dashes over into the switchboard room through the door at left of the gallery. He has the startled and terrified Jennings by the throat before the latter knows it and flings him away from the desk, tears out a drawer and gets the revolver and with it motions him to the door to the office in the rear.) Get in there! Quick!

(Jennings obeys hastily. Reuben turns the key in the lock after him. In contrast to his furious haste of a moment before, he now walks deliberately back through the door to the oil switch gallery. His face is as drained of all human feeling as a plaster mask.) I won't be a murderer . . . I'm your executioner, Mother . . . that's why I'm so calm . . .

(He glides stealthily across toward the foot of the stairs.)

ADA (worried about him, has come down from the platform and is beginning to descend the stairs to the

lower switch gallery—she calls uneasily). Rube ! Where are you ?

REUBEN. Harlot ! . . . that's what Mother called her !

(*He springs up the stairs, shouting fiercely.*) Harlot !

ADA (*she suddenly sees his face and the revolver aimed at her breast as he stops directly beneath her—in a terrified whisper*). Rube !

(*Reuben fires, and she jerks back and pitches sideways on the stairs, dead.*)

REUBEN (*stares down at her body for a moment and lets the gun fall from his hand and begins to tremble all over. He calls pitifully*). Ada ! I didn't mean to hurt you !

(*Then thinking with an anguished appeal.*) Mother ! . . . where are you ? . . . I did it for your sake ! . . . why don't you call to me ? . . . don't leave me alone ! . . .

(*He turns and runs headlong through the switchboard room, and down the stairs to the dynamo-room floor, where he lunges for the rungs on the dynamo's side and clammers-up frenziedly. Up on the platform, he stops for a moment, gasping for breath, stretching out his arms to the exciter-head of his Dynamo-Mother with its whirling metal brain and its blank oblong eyes.*)

MRS. FIFE (*dimly aware of him—dreamily*).

DYNAMO

What was that noise up there, Reuben ? It sounded like a shot.

REUBEN (*pleading like a little boy*). I don't want any miracle, Mother ! I don't want to know the truth ! I only want you to hide me, Mother ! Never let me go from you again ! Please, Mother !

(*He throws his arms out over the exciter, his hands grasp the carbon brushes. There is a flash of bluish light about him and all the lights in the plant dim down until they are almost out and the noise of the dynamo dies until it is the faintest purring hum. Simultaneously Reuben's voice rises in a moan that is a mingling of pain and loving consummation, and this cry dies into a sound that is like the crooning of a baby and merges and is lost in the dynamo's hum. Then his body crumples to the steel platform and from there falls heavily to the floor. There is a startled cry from Mrs. Fife as she runs to the body. The dynamo's throaty metallic purr rises slowly in volume and the lights begin to come up again in the plant.*)

MRS. FIFE (*kneeling beside Reuben, one hand on the forehead of his upturned face*). Poor Reuben ! She wouldn't tell you the secret after all, would she ? (*She gets to her feet and stares with childish resentment and hurt at the dynamo.*) What are you

singing for ? I should think you'd be ashamed !
And I thought you was nice and loved us !
(The dynamo's purr has regained its accustomed pitch now. The lights in the plant are again at their full brightness. Everything is as before. Mrs. Fife goes over and pounds the steel body of the dynamo in a fit of childish anger.) You hateful old thing, you !
(Then she leaves off, having hurt her hands, and begins to cry softly.)

CURTAIN